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Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-first session

26 February-9 March 2007

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Annotated provisional agenda and proposed organization of work

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
3. Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century":
 - (a) Implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives:
 - (i) The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child;
 - (ii) Evaluation of progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality;
 - (b) Emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men;
 - (c) Gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters.
4. Communications concerning the status of women.
5. Follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolutions and decisions.
6. Provisional agenda for the fifty-second session of the Commission.
7. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its fifty-first session.



Annotations

1. Election of officers

In accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, and pursuant to Council resolution 1987/21 and decision 2002/234,¹ the Commission on the Status of Women at the first meeting of its fiftieth session, on 22 March 2005, elected, by acclamation, Carmen María Gallardo (El Salvador) as Chairperson, and Adekunbi Abibat Sonaïke (Nigeria), Szilvia Szabo (Hungary), Dicky Tomar (Indonesia) and Thomas Woodroffe (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) as Vice-Chairpersons, of the fiftieth and fifty-first sessions of the Commission. At its 2nd meeting, on 27 February 2006, the Commission appointed Mr. Tomar (Indonesia) to serve also as Rapporteur of its fiftieth and fifty-first sessions.

The Commission shall appoint two candidates to fill the pending vacancies on the Working Group on Communications on the Status of Women established in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1983/27.

2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Rule 7 of the rules of procedure provides that the Commission shall, at the beginning of each session, adopt the agenda for that session on the basis of the provisional agenda.

The provisional agenda and documentation for the fifty-first session of the Commission were approved by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 2006/235.

Preparations for the fifty-first session of the Commission were undertaken in accordance with its agreed conclusions 1996/1 on methods of work and Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/9. Accordingly, the Bureau of the Commission held several meetings as well as informal briefings and consultations with all interested delegations to consider the organization and methods of work for the session.

As per past practice, statements delivered by representatives of delegations of members and observers of the Commission during general discussions shall be limited to five minutes, and statements made on behalf of groups of delegations to 10 minutes. It is also recommended that interventions from non-governmental organizations be integrated into the general debate and in thematic panel discussions in a geographically balanced manner.

¹ In accordance with Council decision 2002/234, the Commission immediately following the closure of its fifty-first session will hold the first meeting of its fifty-second session for the sole purpose of electing the new Chairperson and other members of the Bureau for the fifty-second and fifty-third sessions.

3. Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

(a) Implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

High-level round table

In its decision 46/101, the Commission decided that, starting from its forty-seventh session, it would introduce the option of high-level round tables, and it authorized the Bureau to decide, after consultation with all interested members of the Commission through the regional groups, on the number, timing and theme of any such round tables.

In its resolution 2006/9, the Economic and Social Council further decided that the annual interactive high-level round table would focus on experiences, lessons learned and good practices, including results with supporting data, where available, in relation to the implementation of previous commitments made with regard to the priority theme.

The high-level round table, at the fifty-first session, will focus on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child.

Documentation

Discussion guide on the high-level round table — Note by the Bureau (E/CN.6/2007/CRP.4)

Priority theme

In its resolution 2006/9, the Economic and Social Council endorsed the Commission's proposed future organization and methods of work. Accordingly, at its fifty-first session, the Commission will consider the theme "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child". In the same resolution, the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission, on an annual basis, a report on the priority theme including proposals for possible indicators, elaborated in cooperation with the Statistical Commission, to measure progress in implementation with regard to the priority theme. The report of the Secretary-General will be before the Commission.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child (E/CN.6/2007/2)

(b) Emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men

In its resolution 2006/9, the Economic and Social Council requested the Bureau of the Commission on the Status of Women, prior to each session, to identify, in consultation with all States, through their regional groups, an emerging issue for consideration by the Commission, taking into account developments at the global and regional levels as well as planned activities within the United Nations, where increased attention to gender perspectives was required.

Further to its consultations, the Bureau recommends that the Commission hold an interactive expert panel on the emerging issue theme "Elimination of all forms of violence against women: follow-up to the Secretary-General's in-depth study at national and international levels".

(c) Gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters

Progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes, with a particular focus on the priority theme

The Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission, on an annual basis, a report on progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes, with a particular focus on the priority theme (Council resolution 2006/9).

Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

In its resolution 2006/8 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council requested the Commission to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. It also requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means and to submit to the Commission at its fifty-first session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of that resolution.

Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan

In its resolution 2006/7 on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, the Economic and Social Council invited the Secretary-General to take into account a gender perspective when preparing the reports requested by the General Assembly in its resolutions 60/32 A and B and to include a specific and substantive section focusing on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan in those reports. The Council also requested the Secretary-General to transmit those reports to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-first session.

Joint workplan on the human rights of women

In accordance with resolution 39/5 of the Commission on the Status of Women and resolutions 1997/43 and 2005/42 of the Commission on Human Rights, the Commission on the Status of Women will have before it a report on the joint workplan of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Violence against women

In resolution 50/166 on the role of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in eliminating violence against women, the General Assembly requested UNIFEM to include in its regular reports information regarding its

activities, including the establishment of a trust fund in support of national, regional and international actions to eliminate violence against women and to provide such information to the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

In accordance with article 21.2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the reports of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women are transmitted to the Commission for information. The report of the Committee on its thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth sessions and a note transmitting the results of the Committee's thirty-seventh session (15 January to 2 February 2007) will be before the Commission.

Advisability of the appointment of a special rapporteur on laws that discriminate against women

In its resolution 50/3, the Commission decided, on the basis of the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2006/8) and the requested views thereon, to consider at its fifty-first session the advisability of the appointment of a special rapporteur on laws that discriminate against women, bearing in mind the existing mechanisms with a view to avoiding duplication. The report before the Commission (E/CN.6/2007/8) complements the Secretary-General's previous report on this subject (E/CN.6/2006/8) and should be read in conjunction with it.

Proposed programme of work

Regulation 4.8 of the United Nations Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, stipulates that "The programmes and subprogrammes of the proposed medium-term plan shall be reviewed by the relevant sectoral, functional and regional intergovernmental bodies, if possible during the regular cycle of their meetings, prior to their review by the Committee for Programme and Coordination, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly". The proposed programme of work of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women for the biennium 2008-2009 will be before the Commission for information.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes, with a particular focus on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child (E/CN.6/2007/3)

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women (E/CN.6/2007/4)

Report on the joint workplan of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (E/CN.6/2007/5)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women on the activities of the Fund to eliminate violence against women (E/CN.6/2007/6)

Report of the Secretary-General on the advisability of the appointment of a special rapporteur on laws that discriminate against women (E/CN.6/2007/8)

Documents for information

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for peace and security (A/61/326-S/2006/727)

Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on its thirty-fourth, thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth sessions (A/61/38)

Note by the Secretariat transmitting the results of the thirty-seventh session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (E/CN.6/2007/CRP.1)

Note by the Secretariat on the proposed programme of work of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women for the biennium 2008-2009 (E/CN.6/2007/CRP.2)

4. Communications concerning the status of women

In its resolution 76 (V), the Council established a procedure by which the Commission would receive and consider communications concerning the status of women. In its resolution 304 I (XI), the Council amended resolution 76 (V) and requested the Secretary-General to compile, before each session of the Commission, a list of confidential and non-confidential communications, containing a brief indication of the substance of each communication.

In its resolution 1983/27, the Council reaffirmed the mandate of the Commission to consider confidential and non-confidential communications on the status of women and authorized the Commission to appoint a working group to consider such communications and prepare a report thereon for the Commission.

In its resolution 1993/11, the Economic and Social Council reaffirmed that the Commission was empowered to make recommendations to the Council on what action should be taken on emerging trends and patterns of discrimination against women revealed by such communications.

In its decision 2002/235, the Council decided, in order to make the communications procedure of the Commission more effective and efficient:

- (a) That the Commission, starting at its forty-seventh session, should appoint, at each session, the members of the Working Group on Communications on the Status of Women for the next session with a view to enabling the Working Group to review the communications before it and finalize its report to be issued three days before the adoption of the agenda by the Commission;
- (b) To request the Secretary-General:
 - (i) To inform Governments about each communication pertaining to them that would be considered by the Commission and give them at least

12 weeks before the consideration of such communications by the Working Group;

(ii) To ensure that the members of the Working Group receive in advance the lists of communications, including replies from Governments, if any, to be taken into account in preparing its report for examination by the Commission.

At its resumed 14th meeting, on 16 March 2006, the Commission appointed Jiakun Guo (China), Jennifer Feller (Mexico) and Janne Jokinen (Finland) as members of the Working Group. The Commission also decided to authorize the two candidates to be appointed to fill the outstanding posts to participate fully in the work of the Working Group once endorsed by their respective regional groups.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the confidential list of communications concerning the status of women (E/CN.6/2007/SW/Communications List No. 41).

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the confidential list of communications concerning the status of women (E/CN.6/2007/SW/Communications List No. 41, addendum).

5. Follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolutions and decisions

The Commission will have before it a letter from the President of the Economic and Social Council on follow-up to the Council's policy recommendations.

In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2001/27, functional commissions were invited to provide concise, action-oriented input to the Council's annual high-level segment. The Commission will have before it a note by the Secretariat as an input to the 2007 high-level segment of the Council.

Documentation

Letter dated 2 November 2006 from the President of the Economic and Social Council to the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/CN.6/2007/7)

Note by the Secretariat as an input to the 2007 high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council (E/CN.6/2007/CRP.3).

6. Provisional agenda for the fifty-second session of the Commission

In accordance with rule 9 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Council, the Commission will have before it a draft provisional agenda for its fifty-second session, including the list of documents to be submitted for its consideration.

7. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its fifty-first session

In accordance with rule 37 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Council, the Commission shall submit to the Council a report on the work of its fifty-first session.

Annex I**Proposed organization of work**

<i>Date/time</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Programme</i>
Monday, 26 February		
10 a.m.	1. Election of officers	Approval of nominees to membership in the Working Group on Communications
	2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters	
	3. Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"	Introduction of reports General discussion
3 p.m.	3 (a) (i). Implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child	High-level round table on experiences, lessons learned and good practices, including results with supporting data, where available, in relation to the implementation of previous commitments made with regard to the priority theme
Tuesday, 27 February		
10 a.m.	3 (a) (i). Implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child	Interactive expert panel on key policy initiatives to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child
3 p.m.	3 (c). Gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters	An interactive expert panel on capacity-building on mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes for the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child

<i>Date/time</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Programme</i>
Wednesday, 28 February*		
10 a.m.	3. Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"	General discussion
3 p.m.	3 (<i>continued</i>)	General discussion
Thursday, 1 March		
10 a.m.	3 (<i>continued</i>)	General discussion
3 p.m.	Item 3 (b). Emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men	Interactive expert panel on the theme "Elimination of all forms of violence against women: follow-up to the Secretary-General's in-depth study at national and international levels"
Friday, 2 March		
10 a.m.	3 (a) (ii). Implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: evaluation of progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality	Interactive dialogue to evaluate progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions on "The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality"
3 p.m.	3 (a) (i) (<i>continued</i>)	Informal consultations (Agreed conclusions)
Monday, 5 March		
10 a.m.	3 (a) (i) (<i>continued</i>)	Informal consultations (Agreed conclusions)
3 p.m.	3 (a) (i) (<i>continued</i>)	Informal consultations
Tuesday, 6 March		
10 a.m.	3 (a) (i) (<i>continued</i>)	Informal consultations (Agreed conclusions)
3 p.m.	3 (<i>continued</i>)	Introduction of draft proposals
	3 (a) (i) (<i>continued</i>)	Informal consultations

<i>Date/time</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Programme</i>
Wednesday, 7 March		
10 a.m.	3 (a) (i) (<i>continued</i>)	Informal consultations (Agreed conclusions)
12 noon-1 p.m.	5. Follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolutions and decisions	
3 p.m.	4. Communications concerning the status of women	Closed meeting to consider the report of the Working Group on Communications
	3 (<i>continued</i>)	Informal consultations
Thursday, 8 March		
10 a.m.-12 noon	(Commemorative event) ^b	Observance of International Women's Day (2 hours)
3 p.m.	3 (<i>continued</i>)	Action on draft proposals
	3 (a) (i) (<i>continued</i>)	Informal consultations
Friday, 9 March		
10 a.m.	3 (<i>continued</i>)	Action on draft proposals
	6. Provisional agenda for the fifty-second session of the Commission	Consideration of the draft provisional agenda for the fifty-second session of the Commission
3 p.m.	7. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its fifty-first session	Adoption of the report Closure of the session Election of officers

^a An informal panel on "Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women" will be held from 1 to 3 p.m.

^b Informal event to be held on the margin of the fifty-first session of the Commission.

Annex II

Membership of the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-first session (2007)

(45 members; four-year term)

<i>Membership</i>	<i>Term expires at close of session in the year</i>
Algeria	2007
Armenia	2007
Belgium	2007
Belize	2009
Bolivia	2007
Brazil	2010
Cameroon	2010
Canada	2007
China	2008
Congo	2007
Croatia	2009
Djibouti	2010
Dominican Republic	2008
Ecuador	2010
El Salvador	2008
Germany	2009
Ghana	2008
Hungary	2008
Iceland	2008
India	2007
Indonesia	2010
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	2010
Japan	2009
Kazakhstan	2008
Lesotho	2010

<i>Membership</i>	<i>Term expires at close of session in the year</i>
Malaysia	2010
Mali	2009
Mauritius	2008
Mexico	2010
Morocco	2009
Netherlands	2009
Nigeria	2007
Peru	2009
Qatar	2009
Republic of Korea	2010
Russian Federation	2007
Suriname	2008
Thailand	2007
Togo	2010
Turkey	2007
United Arab Emirates	2010
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	2009
United Republic of Tanzania	2009
United States of America	2008
Zambia	2010



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Commission on the Status of Women

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Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern, and further actions and initiatives

The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared in accordance with the programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women for 2007-2009 which identified "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child" as the priority theme for the Commission's fifty-first session. The report analyses the current situation of the girl child and proposes recommendations for consideration by the Commission.

* E/CN.6/2007/1.



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I. Introduction

1. At its fiftieth session, the Commission on the Status of Women decided to consider "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child" as the priority theme at its fifty-first session, within its agreed programme of work for 2007-2009.¹ The Commission will also consider a report on progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes, with a particular focus on the priority theme.²

2. In order to facilitate increased understanding of the manifestations of discrimination and violence against the girl child and to assist the Commission in its deliberations, the Division for the Advancement of Women, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), organized an Expert Group Meeting at the Innocenti Research Centre in Florence, Italy, from 25 to 28 September 2006. An online discussion organized by the Division from 8 August to 12 September 2006 provided additional insights.

3. The present report provides an analysis of discrimination and violence against the girl child and proposes recommendations for consideration by the Commission.

II. Global policy and legal framework

4. The 1990 World Summit for Children placed the survival, development and protection of the girl child on the international agenda. It acknowledged that equal rights for girls and the equal participation of women in the social, cultural, economic and political life of societies were prerequisites for successful and sustainable development.³ The General Assembly, at its twenty-seventh special session on children, recognized that achieving the development goals for children, particularly girls, was contingent upon, *inter alia*, women's empowerment.⁴

5. The Beijing Platform for Action noted that discrimination and violence against girls began at the earliest stages of life, and continued through childhood into adult life. Fewer girls than boys survived into adulthood because of harmful attitudes and practices, such as son preference resulting in prenatal sex selection and female infanticide, female genital mutilation, early marriage including child marriage, violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, discriminatory food allocation and other practices related to health and well-being.⁵ The outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly identified child labour, violence, lack of access to education, and sexual abuse as obstacles the girl child continued to face and called for the creation of an environment that did not tolerate violations of the rights of women and girls.⁶

¹ See Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/9, para. 23 (a).

² E/CN.6/2007/3.

³ See World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s (A/45/625), annex.

⁴ See General Assembly resolution S-27/2 entitled "A world fit for children", para. 23.

⁵ See *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution I, annex II, para. 259.

⁶ See General Assembly resolution S-23/3, entitled "Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action", para. 68 (a).

6. At the 10-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2005, Member States reported that, despite the achievements made, particularly in relation to the enactment of legislation, the protection of the rights of the girl child had not been fully achieved.⁷ Harmful traditional practices, including female genital mutilation/cutting, and early and forced marriages, persisted. Girls were also at high risk of sexual abuse, commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking, including in conflict and post-conflict situations.

7. The General Assembly has regularly addressed the situation of the girl child, including through resolutions on traditional and customary practices affecting the health of women and girls, and trafficking in women and girls. In resolution 60/141 of 16 December 2005 on the girl child, the Assembly expressed deep concern about the discrimination and violation of the rights of the girl child, which placed girls at a disadvantage compared to boys with respect to education, nutrition, physical and mental health care, curtailed their rights, denied them the opportunities and benefits of childhood and adolescence and subjected them to various forms of cultural, social, sexual and economic exploitation. The Assembly also voiced concern that girls were among the most adversely affected by poverty and armed conflict.

8. In 2006, during the comprehensive review of the targets in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (2001), Member States recognized that gender inequalities and violence against women and girls increased their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, and pledged to eliminate gender inequalities, gender-based abuse and violence, and increase the capacity of women and adolescent girls to protect themselves from the risk of HIV infection.⁸

9. Two studies submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session drew attention to violence faced by girls. The report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children noted that girls are at greater risk than boys of early marriage, genital mutilation, forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence, and forced prostitution.⁹ The study called on States to ensure that anti-violence policies and programmes are designed and implemented with a gender perspective, taking into account the different risks facing boys and girls in respect to violence.¹⁰ The Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women underlined that a woman may experience various forms of violence across her life cycle. It highlighted particular forms of violence against girls and young women, such as son preference, prenatal sex selection, female infanticide, early marriage and forced marriage and dowry-related violence. It also pointed to sites where such violence occurs, for example within the family, in the community including in schools, and in conflict settings.¹¹ The study drew attention to new and emerging forms of violence including "date rape".¹²

10. The Commission on the Status of Women has, since its thirty-fifth session, adopted resolutions on women, the girl child and HIV/AIDS. The most recent, resolution 50/2 of 10 March 2006, highlighted, inter alia, the vulnerability of

⁷ See www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/review/english/responses.htm.

⁸ See General Assembly resolution 60/262, entitled "Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS", annex, para. 30.

⁹ See A/61/299, paras. 24, 28, 30, 43 and 45.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 106.

¹¹ See A/61/122/Add.1 and Corr.1, para. 111.

¹² *Ibid.*, para. 83.

women, girls and adolescents to HIV. It noted that the pandemic reinforced gender inequalities, with women and girls bearing a disproportionate share of the burden, including care and support for those infected and affected by the disease.¹³

11. At its forty-second session, the Commission considered the issue of the girl child with emphasis on adolescent girls as a priority theme, and adopted agreed conclusions that proposed actions and initiatives to, *inter alia*, promote and protect the human rights of the girl child; provide education and empowerment; improve the health needs of girls; protect girls in armed conflict, and prevent trafficking and exploitative labour conditions.¹⁴

12. The Convention on the Rights of the Child¹⁵ and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,¹⁶ together with their Optional Protocols, as well as other conventions and treaties, provide the legal framework for the protection and promotion of the human rights of girls. They prescribe a comprehensive set of measures to ensure the elimination of discrimination against the girl child. Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as "every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier," and article 2 clarifies that Convention rights are to be enjoyed by children "without discrimination of any kind", including on grounds of sex. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women sets out obligations of States parties to ensure the practical realization of the principle of equality of men and women. The treaty bodies monitoring implementation of these Conventions address the situation of the girl child in their constructive dialogue with States parties, concluding comments, and general recommendations/comments.

III. Persistent discrimination and violence against the girl child

13. Significant progress has been made in addressing discrimination and violence against girls and recognizing their rights. A total of 192 and 185 States are party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, respectively. International Labour Organization Conventions No. 182 and No. 138 on child labour have been ratified by 87 per cent and 79 per cent of Member States, respectively.¹⁷ Many Governments have strengthened national laws to ban sex selective abortions, combat child labour, increase the minimum age of marriage and address violence against girl children, including child prostitution, trafficking, pornography and sexual abuse. Significant progress has also been made towards improving girls' access to education.¹⁸

14. Despite these advances, violations of the human rights of girls persist. Although the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the

¹³ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2006, Supplement No. 7 (E/2006/27-E/CN.6/2006/15)*, chap. I, sect. D, resolution 50/2, paras. 3 and 9.

¹⁴ Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/12, chap. IV, Agreed conclusions on the girl child.

¹⁵ General Assembly resolution 44/25, annex.

¹⁶ General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex.

¹⁷ See <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm>.

¹⁸ See report of the Secretary-General on the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (E/CN.6/2005/2), para. 494.

Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women comprehensively set out and protect the rights of children and women respectively, neither instrument consistently or explicitly addresses the specific situation of the girl child.¹⁹

15. The failure of States to incorporate into domestic law and fully implement their international treaty obligations at national and subnational levels contributes to continuing discrimination and violence against girls.²⁰ Policy recommendations endorsed at global level have not been fully implemented at the national level, as evidenced in the 10-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action.¹⁸ Discriminatory stereotypical attitudes and behaviours have direct negative implications for the status and treatment of girls. Such stereotypes impede the implementation of legislative and normative frameworks that guarantee gender equality and prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex.

16. At the policy level, concerns specific to the girl child are subsumed under broader policies, strategies and action plans focused on women or children, in national and local contexts. Policies and strategies for gender equality may not always be sufficiently age-sensitive; and child-specific policies may not adequately reflect the special situations, needs and risks faced by girls. Gender-sensitive budget initiatives and budget initiatives which focus on children also tend to neglect the specific needs and priorities of the girl child.

17. Many critical actors, such as government officials, communities and families, remain unaware of girls' rights. Girls themselves may not be fully informed of their rights. Many girls receive less encouragement than boys to participate in and learn about the social, economic and political functioning of society, and are not offered the same opportunities to take part in decision-making processes.

18. Millions of school-age girls worldwide are working in domestic service, which is among the most invisible of female-dominated occupations.²¹ Many girls enter domestic work at young ages, around 12 to 14 years, but some are as young as 5 to 7 years old.²² Official statistics tend to focus on the more visible forms of child labour where more boys are found, while undercounting the informal sector where girls are concentrated.²³ Child domestic labour can expose girls to significant levels of discrimination and violence, with girls isolated in homes with little or no social support or protection.²⁴ They may suffer verbal, physical, psychological, sexual and economic abuse, as domestic work is excluded from regulation in many countries.

19. Because child labour statistics do not consider household work within the family environment an economic activity, girls' involvement in domestic work in their own households is not recorded. Evidence suggests that girls' involvement in domestic work within their own households contributes to their lower levels of

¹⁹ See report of the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child (EGM/Girl Child/2006/REPORT), para. 42.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, paras. 37 and 42.

²¹ Suriyasarn, Busakorn. From the kitchen to the classroom: call for political commitment and empowerment to get girls out of domestic labour and into school. Expert paper prepared for the United Nations Expert Group Meeting (EGM/DVGC/2006/EP.2).

²² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²⁴ International Labour Organization (2006). *The end of child labour: within reach*. Geneva.

enrolment and achievement in schools, thus increasing their likelihood of living in poverty.²⁵

20. Despite sustained efforts to increase access of girls to education, estimates indicate that as many as 55 million girls continue to be left out of formal schooling.²⁶ The Millennium Development Goal 3 target to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, has already been missed. Obstacles to girls' regular attendance at school can include fear of violence on school premises, sometimes exacerbated by lack of separate, safe sanitary facilities, as well as on their way to/from school. Even where increased enrolment of girls has been achieved, positive outcomes are not guaranteed, as girls are more likely than boys to repeat classes or to drop out of school.²⁷ Curricula, textbooks and other educational materials and teaching methods which are not gender-sensitive can reduce the empowering potential of schools. Evidence shows that girls are less motivated to pursue studies in science and technology and have lower achievement levels in these areas than boys, owing to low expectations and stereotypical attitudes.²⁸ Fewer girls than boys access and use information and communication technology (ICT),²⁹ and girls continue to be underrepresented in ICT courses, computer clubs and ICT-based careers.

21. The safety of girls is often jeopardized in the family, community and in educational institutions, in the very spaces that are supposed to provide them with safety, and at the hands of individuals and institutions charged with their protection.³⁰ The risk of sexual abuse at home and in the community is greater for girls than boys.³¹ According to a multi-country study by the World Health Organization (WHO), conducted in both developed and developing countries, a large percentage of women reported having been sexually abused before the age of 15, in most cases by male family members other than the father or stepfather.³² The Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women draws attention to sexual harassment and violence against girls and young women in educational institutions.³³ Sexual and gender-based violence that occurs in educational settings is mostly directed against girls by male teachers and classmates.³⁴ Girls who engage in sports may face the risk of gender-based violence, exploitation and harassment,

²⁵ Zapata, Daniela. Counting invisible workers: girls in domestic activities with their homes. Paper presented to the United Nations Expert Group Meeting (EGM/DVGC/2006/EP.9).

²⁶ Report submitted by the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Mr. V. Muñoz Villalobos, entitled "Girls' right to education" (E/CN.4/2006/45).

²⁷ Grown, C., Rao Gupta, G. and Kes, Aslihan (2005). *Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women*. United Nations Millennium Project Task Force on Gender Equality. London: Earthscan.

²⁸ Clegg, Andrew (Ed.) (2006). *Girls and Science: A training module on motivating girls to embark on science and technology careers*. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Section for Science and Technology Education, Division for Secondary, Technical and Vocational Education.

²⁹ United Nations/Division for the Advancement of Women (2005). *Women 2000: gender equality and empowerment of women through ICT*.

³⁰ EGM/Girl Child/2006/REPORT, para. 38.

³¹ A/61/299, paras. 44 and 52.

³² Ibid., para. 44.

³³ A/61/122/Add.1 and Corr.1, para. 133.

³⁴ A/61/299, para. 52.

from other athletes, coaches, managers, spectators, and family or community members.³⁵

22. According to the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children, the imbalance in the sex ratio between girls and boys in some regions suggests that girls are at particular risk of neglect, as well as violence.³⁶ Son preference persists in many societies and is the main cause of sex-selective abortions of female fetuses and female infanticide.³⁷

23. The World Health Organization estimates that between 100 and 140 million women and girls alive today have experienced female genital mutilation/cutting, and that each year, a further 2 million girls are at risk of undergoing the procedure.³⁸ Female genital mutilation/cutting is an irreparable, irreversible abuse and violates girls' right to protection.³⁹ WHO reports that most of the girls and women who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting live in 28 African countries, although some live in Asia and the Middle East. They are also increasingly found in Europe, Australia, Canada and the United States of America among immigrant communities.³⁸

24. The number of children who enter into marriage or co-habitation each year varies across regions and countries. Among women and girls aged 15 to 24, 48 per cent were married before the age of 18 in South Asia (9.7 million girls), 42 per cent in Africa, and 29 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean.⁴⁰ Globally, 36 per cent of women aged 20 to 24 years were married or in union before they reached 18 years of age.⁴¹ Parents may consent to child marriage out of economic necessity or in order to provide male guardianship for their daughters, to protect them from sexual assault and avoid pregnancy outside of marriage.⁴² Childhood or early marriages have extremely negative consequences for young girls. Most girls have to cut short their education, live with their husbands among strangers and submit to sex with an older man.⁴³ They lack the freedom to interact with their peers and participate in community activities.

25. Girls in early marriages also face the dangers of repeated pregnancies and childbirth. Adolescent girls between the ages of 15 and 19 are twice as likely to die during pregnancy or childbirth as women in their twenties. For those under 15, the risks are five times higher.⁴⁴ For every girl who dies in childbirth, many more will suffer injuries, infections and lingering disabilities, such as obstetric fistula.

³⁵ A/61/122/Add.1 and Corr.1, para. 134.

³⁶ A/61/299, paras. 43 and 44.

³⁷ EGM/Girl Child/2006/REPORT, para. 57.

³⁸ WHO Fact Sheet No. 241, June 2000.

³⁹ United Nations Children's Fund (2005e), *Female genital mutilation/cutting — a statistical exploration*, New York, p. 2.

⁴⁰ _____ (2005c), *Early marriage: a harmful traditional practice — a statistical exploration*, p. 2.

⁴¹ _____ (2005b), *Child Protection Information Sheets*, Figures taken from *The State of the World's Children 2005*, p. 131.

⁴² _____ (2005d), *Child Protection Information Sheets, Childhood Under Threat, Child marriage*, p. 17.

⁴³ Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, entitled "Cultural practices in the family that are violent towards women" (E/CN.3/2002/83), para. 56.

⁴⁴ United Nations Population Fund (2005). *The State of the World Population 2005: The promise of equality: Gender equity, reproductive health and the Millennium Development Goals*, p. 50.

26. There is growing awareness of the importance of prompt birth registration as an essential step in promoting and protecting children's rights, including the right to identity.⁴⁵ The lack of a birth certificate may prevent girls from receiving health care and other services, and from being enrolled in school. Later in childhood and adolescence, identity documents can help protect girls against early marriage, child labour, and other forms of discrimination and violence.⁴⁶ Treaty bodies regularly emphasize the importance of raising the minimum legal age of marriage for girls and boys to 18 years with a view to bringing it into line with article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and with article 16, paragraph 2, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

IV. Girls in high-risk situations

27. Some groups of girls are particularly disadvantaged and at greater risk of discrimination and violence, including adolescent girls, migrant girls, girls with disability or girls in detention. Poverty can be a major underlying factor in the increased risk of some girls to violence and threats to their well-being and development.⁴⁷ Certain situations or threats, such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, conflict and its aftermath, foreign occupation, displacement and refugee situations can also significantly increase the marginalization and exposure of girls to discrimination and violence. The increased risks girls face in times of upheaval may be partly linked to the breakdown of traditional protective structures, as well as to the disintegration of families in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

28. Girls, aged 10 to 14, are particularly at risk of discrimination and violence. In many regions of the world, societies begin to place restrictions on girls' movement and behaviour with the onset of adolescence.⁴⁸ Adolescent girls may be subjected to harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting and early marriage, be withdrawn from school, and be required to bear a large share of domestic and child-rearing duties. They may have less access to their peers and friends and even be confined to the immediate vicinity of the home, which can have a negative impact on their self-esteem and confidence. Despite being at great risk, adolescent married and unmarried girls in this age group are among the most underserved groups.⁴⁹ Greater efforts are needed to reach girls aged 10 to 14, especially those living outside the protective structures of family and schools, girls heading households, girls at risk of early marriage and married adolescent girls.

29. Systemic gender-based discrimination inhibits the ability of girls to protect themselves from HIV infection or to respond fully to the consequences of infection. Worldwide, 17.3 million women and girls aged 15 years and older are living with HIV, 48 per cent of the global total.⁵⁰ More than 60 per cent of 15 to 25 year olds

⁴⁵ See Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 7.

⁴⁶ UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (2002). *Birth Registration: Right from the Start*. Innocenti Digest No. 9, March; and United Nations Children's Fund (2005a). *The "Rights" Start to Life: A Statistical Analysis of Birth Registration*. New York: UNICEF.

⁴⁷ United Nations Children's Fund (2006). *The State of the World's Children 2006: Excluded and Invisible*. New York.

⁴⁸ Mensch, Barbara S., Bruce, Judith and Margaret Green (1998). *The Uncharted Passage: Girls' Adolescence in the Developing World*. New York: Population Council.

⁴⁹ See EGM/Girl Child/2006/REPORT, para. 110.

⁵⁰ UNAIDS, The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS (2006), *Keeping the Promise: An Agenda for Action on Women and AIDS*, p. 9.

living with HIV/AIDS are female.⁵¹ In sub-Saharan Africa, nearly three out of four (74 per cent) young people aged 15 to 24 years living with HIV are female.⁵² Girls are particularly at risk of HIV/AIDS because of poverty, lack of education and economic independence, early marriage, limited negotiating power and sexual exploitation and rape. Girls can be enticed into sexual relationships by older men with offers of cash, consumer goods and status, exposing them to HIV.⁵³ Traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting, increases girls' risk of contracting the disease. Despite these risks, social norms often discourage education and knowledge about sex⁵⁴ and girls affected by the pandemic are less likely to have access to health services.⁵⁴ Girls who are victims of trafficking are in high-risk situations where they are not able to negotiate safe sex or protect themselves from violence, thereby increasing their risk of HIV.

30. Girls are subjected to discrimination and violence during conflict and post-conflict situations. An estimated 40 per cent of child soldiers are girls who were forcibly or coercively recruited.⁵⁵ Girls may be lured by offers of protection and access to safety zones. Many are abducted to take up arms as combatants or to cook, clean, maintain the camps and provide sexual services for the fighting forces. Others are forced to participate in economic activities related to the conflict, such as diamond and gem mining. They are exposed to abuse, exploitation and sexual violence, including through torture, rape, forced pregnancy, sexual slavery, forced prostitution and trafficking. Rape, including of very young girls, has been used widely as a weapon of war in recent conflicts.⁵⁶

31. In conflict and post-conflict situations, girl-headed households increase. Girls who assume the responsibility as heads of household are at higher risk of sexual abuse, exploitation and exposure to HIV in their efforts to provide for siblings. Girls are exposed to risks of violence when leaving the relative safety of their villages/towns or camps to search for food or fuel.⁵⁷ They may be forced to turn to illegal activities, such as prostitution, to survive, with high risk of exposure to violence.⁵⁸

32. While all child soldiers face problems in reintegrating into society owing to psychosocial trauma, disabilities and lack of access to education, girls experience additional obstacles. The deep-rooted stigma they face in their families and communities on return, combined with the trauma resulting from the abuses they have suffered, makes the formulation and delivery of successful reintegration programmes for girls very difficult. As a result, girl soldiers are neglected during the

⁵¹ UNAIDS/United Nations Population Fund/United Nations Development Fund for Women (2004), *Women and HIV/AIDS: Confronting the Crisis*. New York.

⁵² International Labour Organization (2003), *HIV/AIDS and Child Labour*, Paper No. 6, p. 11.

⁵³ Discussion paper for the high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS (A/59/CRP.3), para. 14.

⁵⁴ See EGM/Girl Child/2006/REPORT, para. 86.

⁵⁵ See Mazurana, Dyan and Carlson, Christopher (2006), *The girl child and armed conflict: recognizing and addressing grave rights violations of girls' human rights*. Paper presented to the United Nations Expert Group Meeting (EGM/DVGC/2006/EP.12).

⁵⁶ See report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, entitled "Intersection of violence against women and HIV/AIDS" (E/CN.4/2005/72), paras. 51-54.

⁵⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2006) Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme Conclusion No. 105 (LVII), 2006, on Women and Girls at Risk (A/AC.96/1035).

⁵⁸ United Nations (2002), *Women, Peace and Security*, study submitted by the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Sales No. E.03.IV.1, para. 90.

reintegration process and most disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes overwhelmingly focus on young men and boys.⁵⁹

V. Empowerment of girls

33. The empowerment of girls is key to breaking the cycle of discrimination and violence and protecting and promoting their human rights. Empowerment entails a process whereby girls gain more control over their lives, become active members of their communities and are able to make informed choices about issues that directly affect them. Supporting the empowerment of girls entails the elimination of all barriers that prevent them from developing their full potential, including through the provision of equal access to, and full participation in, education and training, health services, community activities, and girl-friendly spaces for interaction with their peers.

34. The international legal and policy framework on the human rights and well-being of girls, which sets out the responsibilities of Governments and other actors to protect these rights and achieve girls' advancement, constitutes the basis for the empowerment of the girl child. Establishing effective accountability mechanisms at all levels significantly enhances the full implementation of this framework.

35. Families and communities play a key role in protecting and empowering the girl child. The social capital of girls, in the form of supportive family, friends and communities, needs to be actively nurtured. The active engagement of parents, teachers, and community leaders is required in order to support the empowerment of girls. Social mobilization, awareness-raising and advocacy, as well as alliances with power-holders at different levels, in both formal and informal settings, are required to increase awareness and knowledge about girls' rights and change negative attitudes and practices that discriminate against them and perpetuate stereotypical behaviour and expectations. Empowerment efforts during early adolescence are critical as girls at this stage in their lives may find that their environments become more restrictive.

36. Personal safety and security is essential for the empowerment of girls. The World Health Organization noted that a safe and supportive environment is part of what motivates young people to make healthy choices.⁶⁰ "Safe" refers to the absence of trauma, excessive stress, violence (or fear of violence) or abuse. "Supportive" refers to an environment that enables positive, close relationships with family, other adults (including teachers, and youth and religious leaders) and peers.

37. "Safe spaces" are important platforms through which to deliver life-skills-building programmes and provide opportunities for girls to develop protective friendship networks, learn about their rights, explore their problems, develop strategies to protect their safety and health, practice team-building, develop leadership capacities and have opportunities for recreation. The acquisition of social assets in the context of safe, girl-friendly spaces contributes to the long-term

⁵⁹ Chitalia, Ami and Odeh, Michael. Youth Advocate International (2004). How girl soldiers are punished by their past. In resource paper *Children and Armed Conflict*.

⁶⁰ World Health Organization (1999). *Programming for Adolescent Health and Development: Report of a WHO/UNFPA, UNICEF Study Group on Programming for Adolescent Health*. Geneva. WHO Technical Report Series, no. 886.

possibility for girls to develop a positive self-image, defend their rights and make responsible and informed decisions on matters affecting their lives.

38. Evidence suggests that regular attendance of girls in girls' clubs, integrated girl-friendly centres or youth clubs, over an extended period of time, has a positive impact on their welfare in the long term. It constitutes a promising practice in empowering girls to actively participate in society and counteracting societal pressures which undermine their self-esteem. Access to information relevant to their rights, needs and priorities is a critical element of the empowerment of girls. Increased access to relevant information can empower girls to become involved in organizing with their peers and advocating issues relevant to their lives and their communities.

39. Schools, as the primary institutions for the acquisition of literacy and basic life skills, are crucial drivers in girls' empowerment. Many countries have taken measures to close the gender gap in education, particularly at the primary level, and promoted a gender-sensitive educational environment for girls, both in terms of safety and educational content. Sustained efforts are required to ensure the retention of girls in school and high levels of achievement. In some areas, the provision of scholarships, uniforms, books, free transportation and meals have proven effective in increasing enrolment and retention of girls. Street schools, classrooms in refugee camps, functional literacy classes for out-of-school girls, including married girls, are some examples of successful alternative arrangements to ensure that girls in particularly difficult situations gain access to education.

40. The quality of education, its relevance to the individual and to society at large, the appropriateness of educational content and materials, and gender-sensitive attitudes by teachers are critical factors in ensuring that education contributes positively to the empowerment of girls.

41. Encouraging girls to pursue disciplines traditionally dominated by men, such as science, engineering and technology, is an important means to facilitate their empowerment. Training teachers in gender-sensitivity, revising textbooks to include women scientists as role models and setting up science camps and coaching are some of the means developed to enhance girls' potential in science and technology.

42. Social and psychological support services for girls, especially for those at risk of discrimination and violence, should be an integral part of efforts aimed at girls' empowerment. Girl-targeted programmes should provide age-appropriate integrated services that embrace a wide range of activities, including education on rights, health and nutrition; reproductive health counselling and services; recreational facilities and opportunities such as arts and sports; self-awareness and identity training and self-esteem building tools and activities; as well as various types of vocational training. They should also include efforts to raise girls' awareness of reproductive health issues and to improve their access to information and services, including age-appropriate sex education in schools and other educational settings. Special attention is necessary to focus on the prevention of early pregnancies and the control of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

43. Assisting girls to secure economic independence, particularly girls heading households, is critical for empowerment. Income-generating activities, facilitated by the provision of credit, have successfully supported girls in different contexts, including in coping with the consequences of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and

reintegrating into society after conflict or trafficking.⁶¹ Successful interventions to economically empower girls have also provided financial literacy training; mentoring and social support, counselling and referral services, voluntary savings programmes, as well as internship opportunities in local communities.

44. Information and communication technologies provide unique opportunities for girls' empowerment by improving access to information on health, nutrition, education, and other human development opportunities. They also create new opportunities for social interaction, including peer and bottom-up communication. Strategies and action plans are needed at all levels to address the gender divide in the field of ICT that occurs at a young age.

45. Sport can be a powerful tool for girls' empowerment, leading to the development of critical values and skills, such as teamwork, communication and respect for others. Sport provides new opportunities for developing interpersonal networks, both within schools and communities.⁶² Skills acquired in negotiation and decision-making empowers girls to take on leadership roles.

46. Eliminating discrimination and violence and empowering girls requires the active engagement of boys. Boys need to be sensitized at an early stage, within families, schools and communities, to develop respect for the rights of women and girls. Adolescent boys need to be provided with opportunities to engage in constructive dialogue on gender identities and roles and have positive interaction with girls. The involvement of boys is particularly important in relation to sexual and reproductive health, including in the context of HIV/AIDS.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations for eliminating discrimination and violence against girls

47. Discrimination and violence against the girl child persist in all parts of the world, despite progress in raising awareness about the rights of the girl child, the unacceptability of continued violations of these rights and their detrimental impact on society as a whole, and the efforts undertaken to address inequalities in areas such as education, health, and social protection. Institutions charged with the protection of girls, including families, schools and communities, have been implicated in violating the rights of the girl child. The well-being of the girl child is threatened by stereotypical attitudes and behaviour and harmful traditional practices. Poverty and social and economic upheavals caused by armed conflict and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, further exacerbate the risk of abuse and exploitation.

48. The girl child does not receive sufficient explicit attention in policy and programme development and resource allocations. The lack of data disaggregated by sex and age remains a serious constraint to formulating and implementing effective, targeted policies and programmes and monitoring progress in eliminating

⁶¹ Erulkar, Annabel, et al. (2006). Tap and Reposition Youth (TRY): Providing social support, savings, and microcredit opportunities for young women in areas with high HIV prevalence. In *Promoting Healthy, Safe, and Productive Transitions to Adulthood*, Brief no. 15 (July). New York: Population Council.

⁶² United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace (2003). *Sport as a tool for development and peace: Towards Achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals*. Available at: <http://www.un.org/sport2005/>.

discrimination and violence. Available national-level statistics may mask the persistence of significant discrimination and violence at subnational or local level, including against groups of girls in situations of high risk. Further development of indicators is required to more systematically and effectively measure progress in addressing discrimination and violence against the girl child.⁶³

49. Awareness-raising, community mobilization, and education and training are needed to ensure that all key actors — government officials, including law enforcement and judicial officers, teachers, employers, media professionals and those directly working with girls, as well as parents, families and communities — work to eliminate attitudes and practices which negatively affect girls. The active engagement of men and boys in this work is critical.

50. The Commission on the Status of Women may wish to consider recommending the actions set out below to eliminate discrimination and violence against the girl child.

51. Governments at all levels should:

(a) **Ratify without reservations the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and their respective Optional Protocols;**

(b) **Ratify, bring national legislation into conformity with, and fully implement, ILO Conventions 138 and 182 on, respectively, the minimum age for employment, and combating the worst forms of child labour (including commercial sexual exploitation, slave-like practices, forced and bonded labour, trafficking, and hazardous forms of child labour) to eliminate child labour of girls;**

(c) **Take all necessary measures to ensure that international human rights instruments relevant to the girl child are incorporated into national law and become fully applicable in domestic legal systems;**

(d) **Remove all laws that discriminate against girls and ensure that provisions of multiple legal systems, where they exist, comply with international human rights standards, in particular the principle of non-discrimination on the basis of sex;**

(e) **Enact and strictly enforce laws concerning the minimum legal age of consent and the minimum age for marriage, raising the minimum age for marriage where necessary, and generate social support for the enforcement of these laws, inter alia, through increasing educational opportunities for girls;**

(f) **Adopt or revise, as necessary, laws to eliminate child domestic labour of girls and boys under the minimum age for employment, and establish appropriate penalties and sanctions to ensure effective enforcement;**

⁶³ The Commission on the Status of Women called for proposals for possible indicators, elaborated in cooperation with the Statistical Commission, to measure progress in implementation with regard to the priority theme (Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/9, para. 17). The Statistical Commission will discuss the modalities for this collaboration with the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-eighth session from 27 February to 2 March 2007. See EGM/Girl Child/2006/REPORT for proposals of possible further indicators.

(g) Develop policies, protocols and rules to ensure the effective implementation of legislative frameworks on eliminating discrimination and violence against girls, and put in place adequate accountability mechanisms at national and local levels to monitor adherence to, and implementation of, these mechanisms;

(h) Follow up on and implement the recommendations that emanate from periodic reviews of implementation of treaty obligations, and communications and inquiry procedures, as applicable, by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;

(i) Create and maintain, where not currently in place, birth, death and marriage data registries with full national coverage;

(j) Incorporate attention to the needs of children, giving explicit attention to girls, in budget processes at all levels, including resource allocation and expenditure reviews to ensure adequate resources for the elimination of discrimination and violence against girls.

52. Governments at all levels, international organizations including the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders, as appropriate, should:

(a) Conduct surveys of the situation of girls at national and subnational levels to identify groups at high risk of discrimination and violence, ensuring that all data is disaggregated by age, education, marital status, geographical location, ethnicity, and income;

(b) Incorporate gender analysis, including explicit attention to the situation of girls, into the development and implementation of policies and programmes in all areas, including in the context of international development assistance as relevant, to ensure that the needs and priorities of girls, especially girls in high-risk situations, are identified and addressed;

(c) Utilize gender impact assessments as part of monitoring and evaluation to ensure that policies and programmes do not perpetuate or exacerbate discrimination and violence against girls, but actively promote and protect the rights of girls;

(d) Support the development of unified methods and standards for data collection on all forms of discrimination and violence against girls, especially forms that are under-documented;

(e) Collect data and systematically report on internationally agreed indicators related to the girl child;

(f) Develop additional indicators, as appropriate, to more systematically and effectively measure progress in eliminating discrimination and violence against the girl child;

(g) Ensure that follow-up to and implementation of the recommendations contained in the United Nations study on violence against children and the in-depth study on all forms of violence against women and related resolutions of the General Assembly, includes explicit attention to girls at all levels;

(h) Provide age-appropriate and gender-sensitive services to girl victims/survivors of gender-based violence, including health, counselling and legal services, hotlines/helplines and shelters, and ensure adequate human and financial resources for these services;

(i) Develop the competence of all personnel in the legal, criminal justice, health and education systems to secure the rights of victims/survivors of violence against girls through professional education, training and other awareness and capacity-building programmes;

(j) Increase resources in all sectors to enable girls to access information and develop the capacities and skills required to attain the highest standard of physical and mental health, including sexual and reproductive health, and ensure girls' access to age-appropriate sex education, with special attention to the prevention of early pregnancy and the control of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS;

(k) Ensure that boys as well as girls have access to age-appropriate information and services on sexual and reproductive health;

(l) Actively support, through the allocation of appropriate financial resources, targeted, innovative programmes that address the needs and priorities of girls in high-risk situations who have difficulties accessing services and programmes, such as married girls, young mothers, child labourers, girls affected by HIV/AIDS, girls with disabilities, victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, and girls affected by conflict;

(m) Take appropriate measures to provide a supportive environment for girls infected with, and affected by, HIV/AIDS, including by providing appropriate counselling and psychosocial support, ensuring their enrolment in school and equal access to shelter, nutrition, health and social services, as well as to protect them from all forms of discrimination, violence, exploitation and abuse;

(n) Identify and address the needs of girls heading households, including in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, for, inter alia, protection, access to financial resources, access to health care and support services, and opportunities to continue their education;

(o) Ensure that girls who meet the minimum age requirement for employment have equal access to decent work conditions, are protected from economic exploitation, sexual harassment and abuse in the workplace, and have access to education and vocational training, health services, food, shelter and recreation;

(p) Develop policies and programmes to address the situation of girls who meet the minimum age for employment in the informal sector, in particular domestic workers, by promoting and protecting their human rights and preventing economic exploitation, ill-treatment and sexual abuse;

(q) Strengthen advocacy and awareness-raising programmes on harmful traditional practices, including child and forced marriages, female genital mutilation/cutting, engaging community and religious leaders, educational institutions, and families, and provide increased financial support to efforts at both national and subnational levels to end these practices;

(r) Protect girls in conflict, refugee and internal displacement situations, where girls are targeted for violence, and provide appropriate redress and rehabilitation to girls subjected to such violence;

(s) Prosecute all perpetrators of crimes of sexual violence against girls in situations of armed conflict, including United Nations international and national personnel;

(t) Take measures to ensure that the specific needs of girls affected by armed conflict are taken into account in the delivery of humanitarian assistance, including in refugee camps, and in reconstruction efforts and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes;

(u) Incorporate information on the rights of children, giving explicit attention to girls, in the mandates, operational guidelines and training programmes of peacekeeping forces, police, and humanitarian workers in conflict and post-conflict situations;

(v) Ensure that the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict, established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) of 26 July 2005, under the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, includes a specific focus on the girl child with respect to each of the six grave violations against children;

(w) Work to ensure that national action plans to halt recruitment and use of children in situations of armed conflict and other grave violations, as requested in Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) of 22 April 2004 and 1612 (2005), identify and address the specific vulnerabilities of girls in armed conflict;

(x) Identify constraints and gaps and develop strategies to ensure accelerated achievement of equality in enrolment and completion of schooling at the primary and secondary levels for all girls;

(y) Promote gender-sensitive, empowering educational processes, by reviewing and revising as necessary, school curricula, educational materials and teacher-training programmes;

(z) Ensure safe school environments for girls by implementing measures such as increased recruitment of women teachers, policies of zero tolerance for violence against girls, provision of appropriate sanitation and recreational facilities, and securing of safe routes to and from school;

(aa) Take concrete policy and programme measures to encourage and support girls' interest and involvement in fields and occupations traditionally dominated by men, such as natural sciences, mathematics, information and communication technologies and sports;

(bb) Promote and support increased access of girls to ICT, particularly girls in rural areas and other disadvantaged situations, through measures such as appropriate financial allocations and development of safe environments;

(cc) Integrate a comprehensive understanding of the causes and consequences of discrimination and violence against girls into education and training curricula at all levels;

(dd) Develop well-resourced educational programmes to reach girls who are not enrolled in formal education programmes due to specific life circumstances, inter alia, extreme poverty, child labour, abuse or exploitation, trafficking, conflict and displacement, migration, early marriage, pregnancy and motherhood;

(ee) Encourage the active participation of boys, from an early age, in the elimination of discrimination and violence against girls, including through the promotion of gender-sensitive socialization processes, targeted programmes and creation of spaces and environments where boys can be guided in challenging gender stereotypes and negative attitudes towards girls.

53. Governments at all levels, international organizations including the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders, as appropriate, should increase advocacy for and take the following actions to ensure the empowerment of girls:

(a) Provide education and training on the rights of girls to families, community leaders, and all professions relevant to the protection and empowerment of girls, such as social workers, police officers, judges and prosecutors, to increase awareness and commitment to the promotion and protection of the rights of girls and appropriate responses to rights violations;

(b) Disseminate the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the periodic reports submitted by States parties and the concluding comments of the Committees, to the general public in national and local languages, for example, through publicly accessible websites, and produce child-friendly versions to reach both girls and boys;

(c) Engage local community leaders and opinion makers, including in schools, religious and traditional institutions, community organizations, trade unions, businesses and the media, in creating opportunities for dialogue among women and men, and girls and boys, within families, schools and communities, to develop common understanding of the importance of promoting and protecting the rights of girls, eliminating discrimination and violence and empowering them;

(d) Develop appropriately funded programmes to address stereotypical attitudes and behaviours that contribute to discrimination and violence against girls, working specifically with men and boys and other critical actors, such as media professionals;

(e) Encourage male decision makers at all levels, with responsibilities for policies, legislation, programmes and allocation of public resources, to play leadership roles in the elimination of discrimination and violence against girls and the promotion of girls' empowerment;

(f) Develop and adequately fund safe and supportive spaces which facilitate girls' empowerment, such as clubs for girls, peer education programmes, life-skills programmes, and other gender-sensitive youth services, which increase access of girls to, inter alia, legal services and information, sexual and reproductive health information and services, mentorship programmes — including peer mentorship, and recreation, and provide

enhanced opportunities for girls, particularly adolescent girls, to meet and interact with their peers, learn about their rights, discuss their problems, and develop leadership capacities and networking skills.

54. The Commission may wish to encourage the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to:

(a) Invite States parties to ensure that their reports explicitly address the situation of the girl child;

(b) Ensure that the Committees' lists of issues and questions prepared as part of the consideration of States parties' reports explicitly request information about the situation of the girl child at the national and subnational levels;

(c) Encourage submission of information from and dialogue with civil society institutions working with girls in the process of reviewing States parties reports;

(d) Increase direct collaboration between the Committees, including preparation of a joint general recommendation on the girl child.

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters

Progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluations of national policies and programmes, with a particular focus on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution A/C.3/61/L.60 and Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/9. The report assesses the extent to which attention to the girl child has been mainstreamed in policies and programmes at the national level, including through analyses of responses submitted by Member States in preparation for the 10-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the Assembly, as well as the updates received in response to a note verbale. The report also analyses poverty reduction strategy papers and national Millennium Development Goals reports, as well as reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

* E/CN.6/2007/1.



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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 61/145, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to report annually to the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women, on the follow-up to and progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the Assembly, with an assessment of progress in gender mainstreaming, including information on key achievements, lessons learned and good practices, and recommendations on further measures to enhance implementation.

2. In its resolution 2006/9, the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission, on an annual basis, a report on progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes, with a particular focus on the priority theme (para. 18).¹ The thematic issue before the fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women is the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child.

3. In Beijing the Platform for Action (A/CONF.177/20), Governments, in addressing issues concerning children and youth, were called on to promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes, so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on girls and boys, respectively (para. 273).

4. The present report, submitted in response to those mandates, assesses the extent to which attention to the girl child has been mainstreamed in policies and programmes at the national level, through an analysis of responses submitted by Member States in preparation for the 10-year review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (see also General Assembly resolution S-23/3), as well as updates received in response to a note verbale sent to Member States on 20 June 2006. The report also analyses poverty reduction strategy papers and national Millennium Development Goals reports, as well as reports on the implementation of international treaty obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The report concludes with recommendations for the consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

5. The present report does not attempt to provide a comprehensive account of efforts to mainstream attention to eliminating discrimination and violence against the girl child at the national level, but provides an assessment of trends in mainstreaming as reported by Member States. The findings are dependent on the extent to which the girl child was given attention in the reporting mechanisms assessed. The present report should be read in conjunction with the report of the Secretary-General on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child (E/CN.6/2007/2).

6. In preparation for the 10-year review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, 140 Member States responded to a questionnaire distributed

¹ See www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/country/index.html.

in October 2003.¹ All responses were assessed for attention to discrimination and violence against the girl child under the critical area of concern relating to the girl child or in other critical areas of concern.

7. A note verbale was addressed to Member States to invite them to update previously submitted information or to provide the Secretariat with succinct information relating to mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes, with a particular focus on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child. Responses were received from 29 Member States.¹

8. The 141 most recent reports on progress towards achieving the 8 Millennium Development Goals² and the 51 most recent full poverty reduction strategy papers and 27 corresponding progress reports³ were reviewed.

9. In addition, 113 initial and periodic State party reports under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women⁴ and 146 initial and periodic reports under the Convention on the Rights of the Child,⁵ considered by the respective Committees during the period 2001-2006, were included in the review.

II. Mainstreaming attention to discrimination and violence against the girl child in national policies and programmes

10. The right of the girl child to be free from discrimination and the need to protect and promote her rights were recurrent themes in the reports reviewed. While some Member States included specific sections on girls' rights and on discrimination and violence against girls in their reports, attention was mostly focused on discrimination and violence in the context of different thematic areas, in particular health and education.

11. Discrimination against girls was identified by Member States as a causal factor of both inequality in access to and quality of health care, education and economic opportunities, and of violence against girls, including sexual abuse and harmful traditional practices detrimental to their health and well-being. Prevailing negative socio-cultural attitudes and stereotypes were cited as causes of de jure and de facto discrimination against the girl child and violations of the rights of girls.

12. Member States highlighted legislative initiatives as a means to counter discrimination and violence against girls, including enactment and enforcement of anti-discrimination provisions in legislation, and awareness-raising activities and training for legal and other professionals on the legal framework for girls' rights. Initiatives undertaken also included the review of existing policies and programmes

² See www.undp.org/mdg/countryreports2.shtml.

³ See www.worldbank.org/prsp.

⁴ Information contained in State party reports considered by the Committee from 2001 to 2006 may contain information pre-dating 2000; see www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/reports.htm.

⁵ Information contained in State party reports considered by the Committee from 2001 to 2006 may contain information pre-dating 2000. See www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/sessions.htm; reports on the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict were not reviewed.

from a girl child perspective. Some government agencies and line ministries dealing with children incorporated attention to the girl child in policies, programmes and action plans for the promotion and protection of the rights of children.

13. Public awareness-raising by means of media campaigns on the rights of girls were also common strategies. Some Member States undertook the translation and dissemination of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as an awareness-raising measure. Actions were taken to combat discrimination in the media, such as by identifying and addressing gender bias in television and radio; advocating non-sexist content in children's programming; and establishing a dialogue with the media on their role in promoting gender equality.

14. Strategies to address discrimination also encompassed activities to empower girls and create an enabling environment for their increased participation in all social, economic and political spheres. Member States implemented leadership development programmes and peer education for girls, and created "spaces" and opportunities, such as clubs, training centres, cultural programmes and enterprise-development programmes.

A. Education

15. Discrimination and violence against girls in the area of education were highlighted in many reports in relation to, *inter alia*, inequality in access to education and retention of girls in school at all levels, restricted subject specialization, lack of safety in school environments and persistent gender stereotypes in curricula, teaching materials and methods.

16. Strategies widely reported as effective in increasing access to education and retention of girls in school included legislative measures, the incorporation of a gender perspective into education policies, strategies and action plans, and awareness-raising campaigns. Many Member States also reported on socio-economic infrastructure investments, including transportation; school electrification; separate and adequate sanitation facilities for girls; dormitories for girls; and specific informal education and vocational training institutions for girls. At the community level, access to electricity, potable water and roads were reported as measures that alleviated the work burden of school-age girls and facilitated their enrolment and retention in school. Other activities reported as beneficial to girls' education were the establishment of compulsory and free education, the abolition of school uniforms, flexible school schedules, school canteens, the provision of home rations of food, teaching in local languages and the recruitment of female teachers.

17. Gender stereotypes in curricula, restricted courses of study, class segregation, costs of education, early marriage and pregnancy, and sexual abuse and exploitation of girls in school were identified as hindering the retention and achievements of girls in school. To address gender stereotypes, many Governments introduced or strengthened gender-sensitive curricula and educational materials, gender pedagogy, and the sensitization and training of teachers and administrators. Activities targeting girls included gender-specific career advice, tutorial and mentoring support, counselling programmes and the provision of scholarships and bursaries.

18. The development of specific policies and action plans, and/or the incorporation of a gender perspective in existing policies and plans, were used to eliminate discrimination in the selection of subjects and career choices. Awareness-raising campaigns targeting the public, parents, girls and young women, instructors, teachers and school counsellors were among the measures taken to encourage girls to choose non-traditional courses of study, such as science, engineering and information technology. Other initiatives to increase girls' exposure to non-traditional areas included the organization of "girls' days" in technology-oriented institutions and science and technology competitions, and the provision of scholarships and use of quotas for admission to science and technology programmes. Professional women also mentored adolescent girls in science, engineering and technology to encourage them to take up studies in traditionally male-dominated areas.

19. Attention was given to increasing access to and achievements in education for groups of girls facing specific obstacles, such as rural girls, street girls, refugee girls, girls with disabilities and orphaned girls. Many Member States highlighted the discrimination of rural girls and adolescents in relation to education and training. Efforts to increase access and improve the quality of education for rural girls included scholarship programmes, incentives to lower the cost of school attendance for families, school feeding and infrastructure-development programmes.

20. Some Member States also adopted policies and programmes to promote the retention of pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers in school. Steps were taken to prohibit and punish the denial of entry and forced withdrawal of girls from schools due to pregnancy and marriage.

21. The impact of child labour on girls' education was raised as a critical issue. Some Member States highlighted the economic exploitation of girls, in particular in domestic work — both outside the home and within their own households — as a significant obstacle to their education.

22. Initiatives to promote the practice of sports among girls included developing materials on girls and sports for schools, encouraging educational institutions to establish women's and girls' sports clubs; introducing sport competitions for girls in schools; and including a focus on girls' sports programmes as a criteria for gaining access to government funding.

B. Health

23. Little attention was paid to younger girls in the area of health, compared with the specific attention afforded children in general and the health of adolescent girls. Many poverty reduction strategy papers contained information on child health but few paid explicit attention to girls. While many Member States reported on the implementation of successful child immunization programmes under Millennium Development Goal 4, very few supported that discussion with sex-disaggregated data.

24. Actions taken to eliminate discrimination in the health sector, in particular inequalities in access, included the incorporation of a girl child perspective into national health strategies; research on the correlation between poverty, discrimination and poor nutrition levels and high mortality rates among girls; the

expansion of immunization coverage to girls; and school feeding and physical activity programmes specifically targeting girls. Campaigns to promote better nutrition and programmes offering nutritional supplements, including iron supplement programmes to combat anaemia in adolescent girls, were also reported.

25. Member States reporting on the health of adolescent girls focused on sexual and reproductive health, including the prevention of early and teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections and the reduction of adolescent maternal mortality.

26. Measures reported included the establishment of health centres and hospitals providing sexual and reproductive health services in underserved areas to promote increased access for adolescent girls. Efforts to promote a multisectoral approach to sexual and reproductive health included establishing governmental inter-agency groups with the participation of relevant line ministries and other bodies. Member States also developed and implemented training in the area of teenage reproductive health for medical professionals and specialists, made contraceptives more widely available, and carried out media campaigns to raise awareness. Efforts to address the maternal mortality rate of adolescent girls included raising the legal age for marriage, providing incentives to delay marriage and working to eliminate female genital mutilation/cutting.

27. To improve girls' access to health information, including that on reproductive and sexual health, health education programmes and campaigns were carried out in primary and secondary schools and in clubs and organizations for girls, such as the girl scouts. Peer educators were also trained to reach other adolescent girls.

28. Some Member States, particularly developed countries, highlighted the fact that adolescent girls and young women suffer more often than adolescent boys and young men from eating disorders, such as anorexia and bulimia. To address substance abuse and smoking, research and surveys on the prevalence of such abuse among girls, and media campaigns and other forms of sensitization of girls, were conducted.

C. Violence against the girl child, including trafficking

29. When reporting on violence, the specific situation of girls was often hidden behind references to "women and girls", "boys and girls" and to "children" in general. For example, in many reports submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and national Millennium Development Goals reports, discussions on trafficking did not pay attention to the specific situation of girls but referred generally to "trafficking in women and girls". In many reports submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, discussions on the abuse and neglect of children did not give explicit attention to girls, and attention to violence in reports submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women often did not focus specifically on the situation of girls but referred to "violence against women and girls".

30. Specific forms of violence against the girl child were, however, addressed by many Member States, including sexual exploitation, domestic violence, custodial violence and trafficking. The particular vulnerability of specific groups of girls to

violence, including rural, migrant, ethnic minority and refugee girls, was highlighted, *inter alia*, in the context of trafficking and sexual exploitation.

31. In order to protect girls from violence, legislative initiatives were undertaken and attention to girls incorporated into national action plans, policies and programmes on gender-based violence. Some Member States also developed specific action plans, policies or programmes on violence against girls. Steps taken to strengthen legal frameworks included the review and amendment of existing legislation, the enactment of new laws, efforts to ensure the enforcement of existing laws and the prosecution and adequate punishment of perpetrators of violence, in particular sexual violence and exploitation. Other initiatives included the sensitization of law enforcement officials, legal professionals and judges; increased provision of legal support and access to the judicial system for victims of violence; and the creation of institutional mechanisms to enable women and girls to report on acts of violence and receive any necessary support.

32. Awareness-raising initiatives were undertaken to prevent violence against girls, including information, advocacy and sensitization campaigns at the national and community levels. Training programmes, workshops and seminars targeting, *inter alia*, the general public, medical and educational professionals, the parents of young girls and community leaders, were among the measures utilized. Other innovative activities included campaigns against sexual harassment in schools — some involving girls in their design and implementation — and the use of public service announcements on television and in cinemas.

33. To protect and support girl victims of violence and girls in situations of high risk, Member States established shelters providing medical, social and psychological care; trained and sensitized medical, legal and law enforcement personnel; set up phone lines offering support and information for victims; increased the number of women in law enforcement; and established gender desks at police stations. Innovative examples of action taken included multisectoral programmes, which integrated psychological counselling, support for rehabilitation and reintegration and public awareness components to increase the visibility of violence against girls. Projects focused on informing girls of the risks of prostitution and trafficking, and other measures taken included the provision of safe spaces for girls who had been sexually exploited.

34. Action against the trafficking of girl children was taken in both countries of origin and countries of destination, and focused primarily on legislation, policies and institutional measures to strengthen the prosecution and punishment of perpetrators and awareness-raising campaigns. Initiatives also included regional cooperation programmes aimed at strengthening efforts to combat cross-border trafficking in girls, and capacity-building programmes, in partnership with international and regional organizations, which included a specific focus on girl children and adolescent girls. Programmes and projects addressed the protection of girl victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation, including their rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration. Other measures reported included research on the causal factors of sexual exploitation of girls, including in the context of trafficking, and the effectiveness of legal protection.

35. Data-collection and research initiatives to assess the prevalence and causes of violence against girls were reported by some Member States as an important component of policy and programme development, monitoring and evaluation.

Studies and surveys were reported on sexual violence, sexual harassment, the abduction of young women and girls and pornographic activities involving girls. Data-collection and research initiatives informed the development of national and regional strategies and action plans to address the needs of girl victims of violence. Research on violence against women from a life cycle perspective was also reported.

36. The abuse, including sexual abuse, of girls working as domestic servants was reported, often in the context of trafficking. Efforts to eliminate the exploitation and abuse of girls in domestic service and in other sectors included integrating girl-specific policies on child labour into national development action plans and adopting specific action plans to protect girls from economic exploitation. Member States made efforts to enact and enforce legislation that ensured the protection of girls' rights, including the establishment of legal minimum ages for employment, and to sensitize employers on the rights of young female workers.

37. The unequal access of girls to education, including non-formal education and training, was reported as linked to increased vulnerability to sexual and commercial exploitation and abuse. Steps taken to address that situation included setting up vocational training centres to improve economic and educational opportunities for girls, and encouraging families to ensure that girls and boys had equal access to school through, inter alia, awareness-raising campaigns on the importance of girls' education and the provision of financial incentives for families.

D. Harmful traditional practices

38. Harmful traditional practices affecting girls, such as son preference, prenatal sex selection, female genital mutilation/cutting, early and forced marriage, early pregnancy and honour crimes were addressed by many Member States in the reporting mechanisms assessed.

39. Legislative measures, including the adoption of, or amendments to, criminal, penal and/or civil codes, were taken by many Member States to combat harmful traditional practices. Steps were also taken to strengthen the enforcement of laws and to ensure that the perpetrators of harmful traditional practices were adequately penalized. Steps were taken in some countries to raise the legal age of marriage and consent and to bring legal definitions of children in line with international standards. National policies, action plans and programmes were adopted and national committees and councils established to coordinate and monitor the implementation of laws and policies prohibiting such practices. Some Member States also supported groups working at the local level, including non-governmental organizations, through funding and capacity-building efforts, including in the context of development cooperation.

40. Member States took specific steps to prohibit the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting in health facilities; train education and health professionals on its harmful effects; and to retrain practitioners and encourage and enable them to seek alternative livelihoods. Promising examples of the impact of such measures included former practitioners joining campaigns to educate communities on the negative effects of the practice, and parents and community elders promoting alternative passage rites.

41. Awareness-raising campaigns were a commonly reported strategy for eliminating harmful traditional practices. Initiatives included information campaigns targeting girls, their families, community elders and leaders, medical and educational professionals, social workers and civil servants; national dialogues to facilitate discussion and increase public awareness; and the establishment of a national day to raise awareness of harmful traditional practices. A wide range of mechanisms were utilized in awareness-raising campaigns, from the mass media to traditional community theatre and puppetry.

42. Other measures taken to eliminate harmful traditional practices included the promotion of girls' increased access to education and the creation of information and support centres for victims or girls at risk, including immigrant girls. Promising approaches included the development of an online database on female genital mutilation/cutting and forced marriages for medical and education professionals and line ministries; the establishment of information and consultation centres targeting refugee women and girls; and the provision of information about female genital mutilation/cutting during asylum interviews.

E. Girls in high-risk situations

43. In all reporting mechanisms, Member States highlighted children in situations of high-risk of discrimination and violence. However, few provided explicit attention to the girl child or reported on specific support for girls exposed to, or victims of, discrimination and violence. For example, while children were often indicated as particularly vulnerable to poverty in poverty reduction strategy papers and national Millennium Development Goal reports, few specific details were provided on the effects of poverty on girls, including adolescent girls. Nearly half of all Member States that reported on orphaned or abandoned children in poverty reduction strategy papers did not focus specifically on the girl child.

44. The groups of girls that did receive explicit attention included pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers, and girls from rural areas, especially in relation to their access to health care, education and training. Girls in ethnic minorities, indigenous girls and disabled girls were also given some specific attention, most often in the context of access to and quality of education and economic opportunities. The situation of internally displaced and refugee girls, as well as of girls in conflict and post-conflict situations and girls in conflict with the law, was also raised.

45. Activities undertaken to respond to the specific needs of girls in vulnerable situations included bilingual and special education programmes, as well as initiatives in the area of health and nutrition. Some Member States provided economic subsidies or scholarships for girls in vulnerable situations, including teenage mothers and indigenous girls. Institutional arrangements for the protection of girls included special housing for orphaned girls, vocational training facilities for disabled girls and separate accommodation for girls in legal custody. Initiatives targeting girls affected by conflict included support for the reintegration of demobilized girls into their communities; health education and awareness-raising programmes for adolescent girls in internally displaced and refugee populations; and studies and projects on girls formerly associated with armed groups and on those abducted during armed conflict.

46. While some specific attention was given to the vulnerability of the girl child to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, including in the context of female genital mutilation/cutting, sexual exploitation and substance abuse, very few Member States reported on projects and programmes which specifically addressed the needs of girls. Initiatives undertaken included campaigns to increase girls' awareness of their sexual and reproductive rights and empowerment programmes to increase their capacity to exercise those rights. Mass media- and community-based public education campaigns were used to combat attitudes and practices detrimental to girls' sexual and reproductive rights. Other strategies to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS to girls included health education campaigns in schools, including peer education; provision of free contraceptives; and free telephone-based information and support hotlines and other information services targeting adolescent girls.

47. When specific attention was given to girls in the context of poverty, the focus was on the vulnerability of girls to poverty, especially girls from rural areas and young mothers, and on the impact of poverty on girls, for example in terms of increased household work burdens, nutritional deficits and food insecurity, and limited access to education. Initiatives taken to ease the burden of poverty on girls and decrease their vulnerability to poverty included physical infrastructure development projects, such as building roads, schools and health-care centres in underserved or remote areas, and the provision of services, including energy and water, to ease girls' household work burdens. Measures taken to shift the burden of the costs of education away from poor families and encourage families to support the education of girls included providing special bursaries, the waiving of school fees for girls and free uniforms and supplies for girls, including take-home food rations.

F. Institutional arrangements

48. Some Member States took action to incorporate a children's rights perspective in budget processes, or to develop specific children's budgets.⁶ Efforts to engage girls and boys in the budget processes through children's parliaments and councils were also reported. However, little attention was given to mainstreaming specific attention to the girl child in national or local budget processes. Initiatives to focus attention on girls in budget processes were primarily undertaken within the education sector.

49. Girl-specific resource allocation was reported, in particular for promoting girls' education in rural areas through trust funds, scholarships, bursaries and the offsetting of school fees. In the context of development cooperation targeting of girls reported, focused on the education sector, including by the promotion of girls' rights and ensuring funding for girls' education in the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative.

50. Member States reported on the collection and compilation of statistics disaggregated by sex. Although some of the data provided in the reports assessed were disaggregated by sex, they were not always disaggregated by both sex and age.

⁶ Child-focused budgeting involves the analysis of allocation of government expenditure to programmes benefiting children and assessment of the impact of these programmes in addressing the rights and needs of children. Such budget processes can lead to reallocation to more adequately address the rights and needs of children.

Sex-disaggregated data were most commonly provided in the area of education. While data were also provided on health, they were not always disaggregated by sex and age.

51. Some Member States noted that when data were available, they were not always reliable or timely, which limited their capacity to monitor and evaluate the impact of actions taken. As a result, the girl child is frequently invisible in research, policy analysis and programme planning and monitoring. Gender analysis should be based on age-disaggregated statistics, and the analysis of discrimination and violence against children must include sex disaggregation in order to make the situation of the girl child visible.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

52. While critical issues for eliminating discrimination and violence against the girl child were identified across all reporting mechanisms, not all Member States provided information on concrete steps taken to mainstream attention to the girl child or on efforts to evaluate the impact of such steps. Explicit attention to girls was not reported in policies and programmes in many areas, including in policies and programmes specifically focusing on women or children. The needs and priorities of girls were often invisible behind references to “girls and boys”, “children” or “women and girls”.

53. In reporting under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,⁷ the specific situation of girls was not always highlighted, and in reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child⁸ the situation of girls was often subsumed under references to children.

54. Progress has been made in identifying issues of concern to the girl child across all sectors, including in relation to girls in high-risk situations. The analysis is, however, not always translated into concrete steps to address the gaps and challenges identified. In both Millennium Development Goals reports and in poverty reduction strategy papers,⁹ the girl child was often taken into account in situational analyses. There was not, however, always sufficient information on the extent to which the analysis was incorporated into planned or implemented policies and programmes. Similar findings can be seen in the

⁷ For the latest reporting guidelines of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, see HRI/GEN/2/Rev.3. Article 10 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women refers to education. Several general recommendations of the Committee are pertinent, including general recommendations 9 (1989) on statistics, 14 (1990) on female circumcision, 15 (1990) on women and AIDS, 19 (1992) on violence against women, 21 (1994) on equality in marriage and family relations, and 24 (1999) on women and health.

⁸ For the latest reporting guidelines of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, see HRI/GEN/2/Rev.3. Several of the Committee's general comments are also pertinent, specifically general comments 1 (2001) on the aims of education, 3 (2003) on HIV/AIDS and the rights of the child, 4 (2003) on adolescent health, 6 (2005) on treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin, and 7/Rev.1 (2006) on implementing child rights in early childhood.

⁹ See www.worldbank.org/prsp for information on guidance provided for the preparation of poverty reduction strategy papers, including on core techniques, sectoral issues and cross-cutting themes, such as gender equality.

responses to the 10-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action; consistent information on the ways and means of incorporating attention to the girl child as an integral part of existing policies, resource allocations and programmes and projects was not always provided.

55. Member States reported on multiple measures to address discrimination and violence against girls, and some focused on multisectoral approaches as a strategy to address gaps and challenges in education, health, poverty reduction and other areas. Girls' education received the most explicit attention in all reporting mechanisms, as a cross-cutting issue in many sectors/issues, such as adolescent health, harmful traditional practices, economic and sexual exploitation, violence and poverty.

56. The most commonly reported measures to address discrimination and violence against the girl child were legislative ones, including efforts to strengthen and enforce existing legislation, and actions to incorporate attention to girls in existing policies, strategies and action plans. Some Member States developed institutional mechanisms, such as national commissions and advisory bodies, to support increased attention to girls, and/or incorporated the attention of the girl child into the work of line ministries and other bodies. Constraints reported in such efforts included lack of resources, institutional capacity, data and coordination. There was little discussion of the accountability mechanisms established to monitor the implementation of those mandates.

57. Advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns remained an important strategy for increasing attention to discrimination and violence against the girl child, including in schools and communities and through the media. Use was made of existing institutions and mechanisms — for example, health centres, schools and youth organizations — to reach girls. In some cases, new "spaces" to support girls' empowerment were created, such as girls' clubs and centres. Capacity-building and training on the rights of girls and discrimination and violence was a broadly used strategy in all sectors and covered a wide range of actors and stakeholders. There was little specific attention to the need to engage boys actively in efforts to eliminate discrimination and violence against girls and to empower girls.

58. Lack of discussion of efforts to monitor and evaluate actions taken limits the potential to assess progress and identify lessons learned and good practices, as well as the gaps and challenges that need to be addressed. The lack of sex-disaggregated data hindered efforts to make the situation of the girl child more visible in national policy and programme development processes, including those focusing specifically on gender equality, the empowerment of women and the elimination of discrimination and violence against children.

59. Specific policies, strategies, action plans, programmes and projects on critical issues affecting the girl child, to complement mainstreaming efforts, were also commonly reported.

60. The Commission on the Status of Women may wish to encourage Governments, international organizations including the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders, as appropriate, to:

(a) Incorporate explicit attention to the situation of girls into the development and implementation of policies and programmes in all areas, including HIV/AIDS, health (including reproductive health), urban and rural planning, immigration, poverty reduction, post-conflict reconstruction and humanitarian relief, to ensure that the needs and priorities of girls, especially girls in high-risk situations, are identified and addressed;

(b) Mainstream attention to the girl child into all policies and programmes aimed at promoting gender equality, the empowerment of women and the elimination of discrimination and violence against children, and systematically document and disseminate lessons learned and good practices;

(c) Ensure that gender analysis and analyses of the situation of children systematically include explicit attention to the girl child and utilize statistics disaggregated by age and sex in order to make discrimination and violence against the girl child more visible;

(d) Increase efforts to mainstream attention to girls in high-risk situations in policy development, planning and resource allocation in all sectors, to more adequately identify and address the specific forms of discrimination and violence they face;

(e) Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of efforts to mainstream attention to the girl child in all sectors, and compile and disseminate lessons learned and good practices, as well as identify gaps, and challenges and strategies to address them;

(f) Utilize gender impact assessments as part of monitoring and evaluation to assess the extent to which policies and programmes actively promote and protect the rights of girls and address discrimination and violence against girls;

(g) Ensure that quantitative and qualitative sex and age disaggregated data are collected, analysed and disseminated to inform policy development and planning and enable effective monitoring of discrimination and violence against the girl child;

(h) Review the indicators for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals to ensure, wherever possible, disaggregation by sex and age;

(i) Undertake specific research on the girl child, including girls in high-risk situations, and integrate the findings, as appropriate, into the formulation of policies and programmes in all sectors;

(j) Develop and/or strengthen accountability mechanisms to ensure that actors at different levels are held responsible for taking the situation of girls, particularly girls at high risk of discrimination and violence, into account in policy development, planning and resource allocation in all sectors;

(k) Ensure the integration of a girl child perspective in all training courses, including courses specifically focusing on gender equality and on the situation of children, and systematically assess the effectiveness of the training;

(l) Ensure that child- and gender-sensitive budgeting frameworks specifically include attention to the girl child, including through the active participation of girls;

(m) Strengthen attention to girls, particularly girls in high-risk situations, in development cooperation programmes;

(n) Develop specific guidance on ways to ensure increased attention to girls and their rights, needs and priorities, including in particular girls in high-risk situations, in the preparation of poverty reduction strategy papers and national Millennium Development Goals reports;

(o) Facilitate the participation of girls of all age groups, as appropriate, in all matters that affect them, including in relation to the development and implementation of policies and programmes and in consultative processes for the preparation of reports under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

(p) Encourage and support, as appropriate, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations, in particular youth organizations, in their efforts to mainstream attention to discrimination and violence against girls;

(q) Develop or strengthen policies and adequately resourced programmes focused specifically on the girl child, to complement the efforts to mainstream attention to girls in existing policies and programmes.

61. The Commission on the Status of Women may wish to encourage the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to:

(a) Invite States parties to ensure that their reports explicitly address efforts to mainstream attention to the girl child;

(b) Ensure that the lists of issues and questions, prepared by the Committees as part of their consideration of reports of States parties, explicitly request information on progress in mainstreaming attention to the girl child in all sectors;

(c) Provide specific guidance to States parties on mainstreaming attention to the girl child in all sector areas in concluding comments/observations;

(d) Develop a joint general recommendation on the girl child that gives specific attention to mainstreaming attention to the girl child in existing policies, resource allocation and programmes.

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and
to the special session of the General Assembly entitled
"Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for
the twenty-first century": gender mainstreaming, situations
and programmatic matters**

Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women**Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

The present report summarizes the situation of Palestinian women between October 2005 and September 2006, in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/8 of 25 July 2006. It reviews the situation of Palestinian women and provides an overview of the assistance provided by entities of the United Nations system, inter alia, with regard to humanitarian assistance, economic activities, education and training, health and the human rights of women. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

* E/CN.6/2007/1.

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2006/8 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council, concerned about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those laid out in the previous report of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women (E/CN.6/2006/4) and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-first session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report covers the period from October 2005 to September 2006. The report reviews the situation of Palestinian women based on information from United Nations bodies or individuals that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Such bodies and individuals include the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967 and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.

3. The report also reflects information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women, including the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Public Information, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) and the World Bank.

4. The report provides recommendations on improving the situation of Palestinian women, including through the continued assistance of the United Nations system.

II. Situation of Palestinian women

5. The period under review was marked by several major developments. It was dominated by the Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip and part of the West Bank and the election of new parliaments in both Israel and the Palestinian Authority, resulting in the subsequent nomination of new Governments.¹ After the election of Hamas in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the fiscal deficit widened as, inter alia, the Government of Israel began to withhold the payment of the taxes and duties collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority.² Prospects for continued international financial support for the Palestinian Authority diminished, leading to a risk of contraction in the Palestinian economy.³ The United States and the European Union announced a freeze on their assistance to the Palestinian Authority until it commits to the three principles spelled out by the Quartet on 30 January 2006, while maintaining direct assistance to the Palestinian people.⁴

6. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, movement was limited as a result of checkpoints, curfews, closures and the separation barrier and its associated regime.⁵ A climate of economic uncertainty and social hardship continued throughout 2005 and 2006, worsened by recurring violence, ongoing construction of the separation barrier, restrictions on movement, land confiscation, house demolitions, arrests and detentions by the Israeli authorities and intensification, from August onwards, of the fiscal crisis.⁶

7. Increased restrictions on free movement in and out of the Gaza Strip and within the West Bank left many women unable to access basic services.⁷ Access by some villagers to nearby urban centres had improved temporarily when the number of closure obstacles decreased to 376 between February and August 2005.⁸ The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 noted, however, that the number of checkpoints increased from 376 in August 2005 to over 500 in August 2006.⁹ As a result, Palestinian women currently live under conditions of forced isolation and are often separated from their families and communities, which provide support, safety and solace.¹⁰

8. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate in the Gaza Strip due to shortages of electricity and water, caused by the 28 June 2006 bombing by the Israeli Air Force of the Gaza power plant, and the continued sporadic opening of only some of Gaza's crossing points.¹¹ The substantial reduction of the electricity and fuel supply,

¹ A/61/80-E/2006/72, para. 75.

² Ibid., para. 65.

³ Ibid., para. 8.

⁴ Ibid., para. 6.

⁵ UNRWA contribution to the report (2006).

⁶ A/61/80-E/2006/72, para. 8.

⁷ OCHA contribution to the report (2006).

⁸ A/61/67-E/2006/13, para. 24.

⁹ A/HRC/2/5, p. 2.

¹⁰ OCHA contribution to the report (2006).

¹¹ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Occupied Palestinian Territory, Gaza Strip Situation Report, 12 July 2006, 12 p.m.

together with the disruption of water supplies, had a severe impact on the daily life of Palestinians who were without light at night and electricity to do their cooking.¹²

9. Women account for 49.4 per cent of the Palestinian population, a total of 1.86 million,¹³ in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. While only 13.8 per cent of overall households in the refugee population were female-headed, such households accounted for 46 per cent of the special hardship families, illustrating the burden of poverty borne by women in the refugee population.¹⁴ Special hardship assistance was provided to 386 families headed by widowed, divorced or abandoned women.¹⁵

10. According to the report of the Director-General of ILO on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories, four out of every 10 Palestinians in the territory were living in poverty on less than \$2.10 a day. The absolute figure increased from 600,000 in 1999 to 1,600,000 in 2005.¹⁶ The poverty rate was nearly 50 per cent in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, with the Gaza Strip rate at approximately 70 per cent in May 2006.¹⁷ Spiralling poverty rates owing to the ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis had a disproportionate impact on Palestinian women and increased the vulnerability of youths and young women.¹⁸

11. The school enrolment ratio of girls as compared to that of boys is almost equal for primary and secondary education.¹⁹ Gender stereotypes continued to exist in the school curricula.²⁰ The Palestinian Higher Education Statistics Report (2004) indicated that more female students (5,043) than male students (4,829) were enrolled in the science and technology fields. Although women accounted for approximately 50 per cent of information technology graduates between 2002 and 2005, only 3 per cent of them were employed in the field, compared to 67 per cent of male graduates.²¹

12. According to the 2006 report of the Secretary-General on assistance to the Palestinian people, continued closures within and between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank severely challenged the Palestinian health system's ability to function at appropriate levels.²² WHO noted that the financial crisis threatened to undermine the delivery of health services that served the majority of the Palestinian population, including women.²³ UNICEF's Humanitarian Action Report 2006 also noted that

¹² A/HRC/2/5, para. 15.

¹³ Focus 2005, Vol. 4, published by UNDP Communications Office, Programme of Assistance to Palestinian People, p. 45.

¹⁴ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixtieth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/60/13)*, para. 120.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ ILO (2006) report of the Director-General on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories, page iv.

¹⁷ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/61/35)*, para. 32.

¹⁸ UNDP contribution to the report (2006).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ UNFPA "Gender-based violence in Occupied Palestinian Territory", Women, Peace and Security Initiative, Technical Support Division, 2006.

²¹ Focus 2005, Vol. 4, published by Communications Office of the UNDP/Programme of Assistance to Palestinian People, p. 19.

²² A/61/80-E/2006/72, para. 53.

²³ WHO contribution to the report (2006).

basic equipment for maternal and newborn health was lacking in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.²⁴

13. Food insecurity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was the result, in part, of the absence of purchasing power, as few people had sufficient money to cover their family's basic food needs.²⁵ The results of a study conducted by UNRWA revealed that, in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank respectively, 54.7 per cent and 34.3 per cent of children aged 6 to 36 months were anaemic, as were 40.2 per cent and 29.9 per cent of pregnant women and 45.7 per cent and 23 per cent of nursing mothers. Other micronutrient deficiencies of concern were subclinical vitamin A deficiency, rickets and iodine deficiency.²⁶

14. The Palestine refugee population has one of the highest birth rates in the region, as approximately one third of Palestinian refugee women marry before the age of 18.²⁷ Approximately 39.4 per cent of the Palestinian refugee population is below 18 years of age and 24.6 per cent consists of women of reproductive age.²⁸ The total refugee fertility rates vary from 2.5 and 2.6 in the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon to 4.4 in the Gaza Strip.²⁹ As a result of increased literacy, generalized socio-economic hardship, increased public awareness of the need for child spacing and the widespread use of modern contraceptive methods, the historically high population growth rates of more than 3.5 per cent among the Palestinian refugees over the past two decades slowed to 2.5 per cent.³⁰ This trend, however, has been reversed in the Gaza Strip since the beginning of the humanitarian crisis in 2000.³¹

15. According to the 2004 labour force statistics of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, women accounted for 15.9 per cent of the total labour force in the West Bank and for 9.1 per cent in the Gaza Strip. The share in Jerusalem was the lowest in the West Bank, accounting for only 10.1 per cent.³² Female employment rates have historically been low in the entire region; however, they have declined even further with the crisis.³³ Unemployment among the working female population stands at 19.6 per cent.³⁴ The closure and separation of the rest of the West Bank from East Jerusalem has limited the access of women from East Jerusalem to employment opportunities.³⁵

²⁴ UNICEF Humanitarian Action Report 2006, p. 106.

²⁵ A/HRC/2/5, para. 32.

²⁶ A/61/67-E/2006/13, para. 55.

²⁷ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixtieth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/60/13)*, para. 67.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Millennium Development Goals, Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2005 Progress Report, December 2005, p. 34.

³³ ILO (2006) report of the Director-General on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories, para. 79.

³⁴ Focus 2005, vol. 4, published by Communications Office of the UNDP/Programme of Assistance to Palestinian People, p. 45.

³⁵ Millennium Development Goals, Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2005 Progress Report, December 2005, p. 34.

16. Despite their low participation in the workforce, Palestinian women have traditionally played a major role in agricultural production.³⁶ Nearly 90 per cent of unpaid female family members are engaged in agricultural work.³⁷ With the loss of land to Israel, Palestinian women are affected by the loss of both a vital source of income and their role as economic producers.³⁸

17. During the reporting period, the labour market of the Occupied Palestinian Territory was subject to persistent and unpredictable security restrictions on the movement of people and products.³⁹ Higher levels of conflict and closure also placed a greater economic and psychological burden on Palestinian women, who not only remained primarily responsible for running the household and caring for family members, but also increasingly engaged in informal employment or self-employment activities to supplement their household incomes.⁴⁰

18. To compensate for lost household income, more Palestinian women were initiating various types of income-generating activities with the support of microcredit institutions.⁴¹ Despite the difficult environment prevailing in the West Bank and Gaza, the number of women participating in savings and credit associations increased by 6 per cent, the savings mobilized increased by 24 per cent and the total amount of loans increased by 32 per cent.⁴² The total number of women members in the savings and credit associations stood at 5,636 persons and their savings reached \$1,471,524.⁴³ The total number of loans issued by the savings and credit associations reached 3,634 loans.⁴⁴ The savings and credit associations' loans provided employment opportunities to female and male members of the households and improved the overall income of the beneficiaries.⁴⁵

19. Employment opportunities were limited for women,⁴⁶ as illustrated, for example, by the fact that Palestinian women accounted for 31.2 per cent of lawyers, 21.4 per cent of journalists and 11.7 per cent of doctors.⁴⁷ The female Palestinian labour force continued to be heavily concentrated in agriculture and services, whereas the male labour force is more evenly distributed across the main sectors.⁴⁸

20. Palestinian women have limited access to decision-making. Only 9 per cent of judges and 12.2 per cent of prosecutors in the Occupied Palestinian Territory were women.⁴⁹ The Millennium Development Goals Report for the Occupied Palestinian

³⁶ A/61/67-E/2006/13, para. 73.

³⁷ World Bank (2006) "West Bank and Gaza, Economic Update and Potential Outlook", p. 24.

³⁸ A/61/67-E/2006/13, para. 73.

³⁹ ILO (2006) report of the Director-General on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories, preface.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 38.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, para. 90.

⁴² IFAD contribution to the report (2006).

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ ILO (2006) report of the Director-General on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories, para. 106.

⁴⁷ Focus 2005, Vol. 4, published by Communications Office of the UNDP/Programme of Assistance to Palestinian People, p. 45.

⁴⁸ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics cited in World Bank (2006) "West Bank and Gaza, Education Sector Analysis", para. 123.

⁴⁹ Focus 2005, Vol. 4, published by Communications Office of the UNDP/Programme of Assistance to Palestinian People, p. 45.

Territories (2005) pointed out that the political participation of women in Palestinian society is low.⁵⁰ The proportion of seats held by women in the national parliament remained 5.7 per cent from 1995 to 2004.⁵¹ At the level of local government, women's political participation in 2005 was higher, at 19.3 per cent in the West Bank and 17 per cent in the Gaza Strip.⁵² By 2005, more than seven ministries had established gender units, including the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Local Government.⁵³

21. Although the Palestinian Constitution promotes gender equality, this is not always reflected in the drafting or implementation of laws and legislation.⁵⁴ Palestinian women are subjected to discrimination under the laws governing marriage, divorce, the custody of children, inheritance and domestic violence.⁵⁵

22. As reported by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967, the occupation and the separation barrier continued to violate Palestinian women's rights.⁵⁶ The Special Rapporteur noted that the barrier in Jerusalem, in particular, resulted in the separation of families, as husbands and wives may separate to allow the Jerusalem identity holder to retain his or her benefits.⁵⁷ Furthermore, an Israeli law on citizenship prohibited Palestinians who marry Israeli Arabs from living with their spouses in Israel.⁵⁸

23. Continuous violence took an intolerable toll on the physical and psychological well-being of Palestinian women.⁵⁹ Every aspect of their daily lives was impacted by violence and restrictions on their freedom and dignity.⁶⁰

24. A case study on gender-based violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, commissioned by UNFPA and presented to an international symposium in Brussels in June 2006,⁶¹ suggested that gender-based violence was increasing as a result of the increased political tension and violence.⁶² According to a report released by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in February 2006 on domestic violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,⁶³ 61.7 per cent of married women had been exposed to psychological abuse, 23.3 per cent to physical abuse and 10.6 per cent to

⁵⁰ Millennium Development Goals, Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2005 Progress Report, December 2005, p. 32.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁵³ Focus 2005, Vol. 4, published by Communications Office of the UNDP/Programme of Assistance to Palestinian People, p. 5.

⁵⁴ Millennium Development Goals, Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2005 Progress Report, December 2005, p. 34.

⁵⁵ UNFPA "Reassessing institutional support for Security Council resolution 1325, defining the UNFPA role and strengthening support for women affected by conflict" consultative meeting, Bucharest, 17-20 October 2005.

⁵⁶ E/CN.4/2006/29, para. 46.

⁵⁷ A/HRC/2/5, para. 63.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ OCHA contribution to the report (2006).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ www.unfpa.org/emergencies/symposium06/index.htm (accessed on 4 October 2006).

⁶² UNFPA contribution to the report (2006).

⁶³ Palestinian National Authority, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, press conference on the preliminary results of the Domestic Violence Survey (2005), February 2006, www.pcbs.gov.ps, cited in UNIFEM "Gender profile of the conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territory".

sexual abuse. In addition, 63.6 per cent of unmarried women (18 years and over) were exposed to psychological abuse and 24.6 per cent to physical abuse.

25. Steps have been taken by the Palestinian Authority to address the issues identified in the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.⁶⁴ A quota law providing that women must make up 20 per cent of local councils was approved; legislative steps were taken to address crimes against women committed in the name of honour; the police and the judiciary were being trained on issues related to violence against women; and gender units were created in police departments. In addition, a ministerial committee was created to amend the penal code to provide better protection to women and provide shelters to the victims of violence.⁶⁵

III. Assistance to Palestinian women

26. This section is based on information submitted by entities of the United Nations system for the preparation of this report. Nine areas of assistance have been identified: education and training; health; employment and entrepreneurship; participation; human rights, including the elimination of violence against women; humanitarian assistance; advocacy; media; and gender mainstreaming.

A. Education and training

27. UNRWA, IFAD and the World Bank provided assistance in the area of education. The UNRWA education programme is one of the chief means of contributing to the human development of girls and women. The Agency promoted occupational training programmes, kindergartens and nurseries, through 65 Women Programme Centres. Women Programme Centres in three camps of the West Bank provided refugee women with information technology training and assisted 73 Palestinian refugee women in obtaining high school diplomas. About half of the teachers and those enrolled in the UNRWA pre-teaching service courses were women. The IFAD three Village Community Multipurpose Centres were used to conduct training courses for women in various educational fields.

B. Health

28. Several United Nations entities reported on activities to improve access to health care for Palestinian women. WHO established a thematic group for women and child health, which coordinates project activities of different donors and implementing agencies, exchanges information, provides advice and recommends priorities for women and children's health. WHO also provided logistical support to the Ministry of Health, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNDP and UNFPA as required.

29. UNRWA undertook multisectoral activities, including full immunization coverage of women and children against vaccine-preventable diseases. UNRWA also

⁶⁴ E/CN.4/2006/61, para. 4.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

provided pre-conception folic acid, iron and folic acid supplementation for pregnant women throughout pregnancy, as well as health education programmes on the prevention of tobacco use, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. In addition, the UNRWA community mental health programme in the Gaza Strip provided essential psychosocial support for Palestinian refugees living in situations of protracted violence and armed conflict. To facilitate gender-sensitive programming, the UNRWA health programme provides sex-disaggregated data whenever possible. To reduce gender-based health disparities, UNRWA encourages gender balance in recruitment and retention policies in its health programme.

30. UNFPA provided technical assistance on population and development, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, especially among adolescents. UNFPA strengthened the integration of reproductive health care in 39 public health centres and two non-governmental organization clinics. Through its emergency obstetric programme, UNFPA continued to ensure safe delivery for women in isolated areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In Bureij and Jabaliya, two innovative women's health centres continued to provide reproductive health care to women in two of the most populated and underprivileged areas of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

31. UNFPA also aided the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and the Ministry of Health to identify indicators to measure the impact of the collapse of the health system on pregnant women, as well as on the overload of the maternity wards in central referral systems.

32. UNIFEM undertook activities to strengthen the institutional capacities of service providers in order to improve the quality of services, resources and information for women. Activities included gender training for the psychosocial teams employed by UNICEF in the Gaza Strip. Coordination meetings among counselling service providers were also set up. UNIFEM also worked on mobilizing and strengthening existing networks among non-governmental organizations to build capacity for better service provision for rural women. During the reporting period, 15 psychosocial counsellors and social workers provided psychosocial counselling interventions for over 1,000 women in the Gaza Strip.

33. UNV is implementing a project on solid waste management to improve the health and environmental conditions of residents of the town of Asira and four surrounding villages in the Nablus area. Women volunteers lead training sessions and organize and conduct visits to households to train other women on waste separation and proper modes of waste collection.

C. Employment

34. Assistance provided in the area of employment included training, research and the provision of jobs. UNRWA expanded the apprenticeship programme offered by seven Women's Programme Centres, to give 151 unemployed refugee women in Lebanon access to training and employment opportunities. As part of a larger research initiative, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process assessed the impact of the Israeli disengagement from Gaza on living conditions, with particular emphasis on women's participation in the labour market.

D. Entrepreneurship

35. Several United Nations entities provided loans, grants and training to enhance Palestinian women's entrepreneurship. Phase II of the IFAD Rehabilitation and Development Project continued to have a strong focus on women's economic empowerment, primarily through access to microfinance and entrepreneurial skills. IFAD noted that the activities for women entrepreneurs had shown a great degree of resilience, as evidenced by the safeguarding of their capital and the continued growth of the enterprises. The IFAD Business Service Centre in Gaza disbursed 228 loans (amounting to \$579,800) to women entrepreneurs for animal and agricultural production and, to a lesser degree, for food processing and handicrafts. A similar business service centre was being established in Jericho.

36. As a part of phase II of the Rehabilitation and Development Programme, two community centres in Azzoun and Jayyous villages were officially opened to serve the financial and social needs of women in the area. The Palestinian Agriculture Relief Committees granted 12 women's regional savings and credit cooperatives interest-free loans. Ten women members of savings and credit associations participated in an exhibition during the olive harvest festival of Bethlehem, in which the complete cycle of production of income-generating projects was demonstrated, encouraging other women to consider establishing joint projects for marketing goods and obtaining group loans.

37. During the reporting period, UNRWA disbursed over 3,558 solidarity group loans to women microentrepreneurs in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic. UNRWA had a portfolio of over 12,980 loans in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, with an outstanding portfolio of over \$7.9 million, of which 23.4 per cent were held by women clients.

38. UNIFEM implemented projects in nine rural communities as part of the pilot phase II of the Sabaya programme, which focused on the economic security of women. Through this initiative, a total of 106 rural women procured equipment and machinery and acquired skills that helped them in the establishment of their enterprises. As a result, four income-generating enterprises were established, run and managed by the women themselves: an electronic bakery, a sewing factory, a day-care centre and a chicken farm. In April 2006, the Sabaya programme was expanded to include a total of 18 women centres in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. A large cross-regional exhibition on the development and marketing of Palestinian women's handicrafts was organized, where products from some of the women's centres under the Sabaya programme were exhibited and contacts established with individuals, groups and organizations involved in the handicrafts sector, with a view to future cooperation.

39. UNCTAD established a Palestinian Shippers Council, chaired by a successful businesswoman. It actively promoted the recruitment of Palestinian women to the Council and encouraged women's participation in all Council activities.

40. Training activities to enhance Palestinian women's entrepreneurial capacities were provided by several entities. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) organized interactive training sessions for over 100 women as a means of upgrading their dairy processing skills. WFP provided Palestinian women with food for work and training activities, including the development of essential skills to reduce the gender gap in accessing education and training and

thereby support women's contribution to household food security. WFP worked to ensure the equal participation of women and men in all WFP funded activities.

41. IFAD continued to provide capacity-building to the cooperatives of savings and credit associations: 1,250 women participated in 14 exchange visits to analyse the performance of the savings and credit associations and exchange knowledge and experience with other members.

42. The UNCTAD integrated capacity-building programme (Empretec) promoted the creation of sustainable support structures to help promising entrepreneurs build innovative and internationally competitive small and medium-sized enterprises. To date, Empretec has graduated 123 entrepreneurs, 16 per cent of whom were women.

E. Participation in decision-making

43. Several entities provided assistance to enhance the participation of Palestinian women in various sectors. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs maintained close links with women decision makers, including briefing newly appointed women ministers and government officials on developments in the humanitarian situation and how they affect women. During the local and legislative elections of December 2005 and January 2006, UNDP supported eight non-governmental organizations involved in voter education programmes to increase awareness of human rights, democratic participation and better integration of women in the democratic election process. With the support of UNDP, newly elected women members of local government were enabled to participate in training workshops on finance, management and law organized in eight districts in the West Bank.

44. At the local government level, UNIFEM supported the mobilization of over 140 rural women in 18 target locations. A women's committee and a coordinator were elected in each location to represent all the women of the communities. Workshops and periodic follow-up meetings to develop a needs assessment and workplan for each location have been instrumental in strengthening channels of communication between women and their local government representatives, in securing women's access to key infrastructure and in ensuring their involvement in decision-making on the best use of this infrastructure.

45. UNESCO organized the international symposium on the theme "Arab women between east and west" in June 2006, with the aim of building links between Arab and European women and promoting the participation of Arab women in economic, social and cultural development. The Symposium's side-event exhibition, "Creativity of Arab women", presented works of Palestinian female artists and craftswomen, and illustrated their role in perpetuating traditions.

46. The World Bank Development Grant Facility supported the Arab Gender and Development Network. Fifteen Palestinian members benefited from an exchange of gender equality information with other members of the Network as well as research and training. The regional research project on the theme "Arab women and decision-making", supported by the World Bank, included a Palestinian national research team.

F. Women's human rights and elimination of violence against women

47. Several United Nations entities provided assistance related to Palestinian women's human rights, including the elimination of violence against women. OHCHR followed developments in Palestinian legislation with regard to women's rights; worked with Palestinian civil society partners on the incorporation of international human rights standards into existing or draft Palestinian legislation; and held discussions with the Women and Child Department of the Palestinian Legislative Council, together with women members recently elected to the Council, focusing on the role and the rights of Palestinian women.

48. OHCHR, UNFPA and the World Bank provided assistance to address violence against women. OHCHR worked closely with the judicial reform support group in the area of crimes against women and girls committed in the name of honour, and informed the group about the cultural background and legal framework behind this phenomenon. In November 2005, OHCHR participated in an initial advocacy campaign launched by civil society organizations to address the issue of domestic violence and worked in partnership with the national human rights institution and civil society to promote human rights, including women's rights.

49. UNIFEM supported the development of a Palestinian Women's Bill of Rights, a joint project between the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the General Union of Palestinian Women, with substantive inputs from Palestinian human rights non-governmental organizations and women's non-governmental organizations.

50. UNFPA supported the development of the national action plan of the Forum of Non-Governmental Organizations Combating Violence against Women, which includes the use of training for advocacy and strategy development on reproductive health to ensure that the national legislation is in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and awareness-raising campaigns on the national action plan. The World Bank supported the Counselling Centre for Women in Difficult Circumstances, which provides support, therapy and vocational training to, and advocacy services for, Palestinian women subject to domestic violence.

51. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, OHCHR, UNDP and UNRWA supported capacity-building on women's human rights and on the Convention. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia supported capacity-building for 61 government employees from various Palestinian ministries — including the Ministries of Women's Affairs; Social Affairs; Interior; Planning; Justice; Local Governance; Economy; Health; Education; Finance; Labour; Culture; Sports and Youth; and Agriculture — through four capacity-building training workshops on the Convention and on preparation of national reports, in accordance with the guidelines set by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

52. The OHCHR training courses for the staff of the Ministry of Women's Affairs provided an induction to United Nations human rights treaties and mechanisms, including reporting to treaty bodies, with a focus on the Convention. OHCHR also conducted training sessions on the Convention and the development of human rights concepts for representatives of Palestinian civil society, including various human rights organizations and non-governmental organizations. OHCHR continued to

integrate women's issues into all training activities, including curricula, and to consider gender balance in the selection of participants.

53. UNDP supported the Ministry of Women's Affairs to provide capacity-building to gender units and staff in 15 line ministries on gender-responsive planning and research, and monitoring and reporting on implementation of the Convention.

54. With the support of UNRWA, the Women Programme Centres, which are pivotal in protecting the human rights of women and children, organized workshops, seminars and training on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In the Gaza Strip, over 19,000 women participated in awareness-raising workshops and in the Syrian Arab Republic, a large workshop was held on civil law and legal issues related to women.

G. Humanitarian assistance

55. Humanitarian assistance included provision of food, cash assistance, temporary work and access to health and other services. During the reporting period, UNRWA provided assistance to approximately 6 per cent of the Agency's poorest registered refugees (special hardship case families), 46 per cent of which were female-headed families. As part of its emergency programme, UNRWA distributed food to approximately 135,000 refugee families in the Gaza Strip and 75,000 others in the West Bank. During the reporting period, UNRWA created an estimated 1.8 million days of temporary work. Approximately 23 per cent of the beneficiaries of the Agency's emergency job creation scheme in the Gaza Strip were female heads of households. In the West Bank this figure was 17 per cent. WFP reported that at least 51 per cent of total hardship cases and institutional feeding beneficiaries assisted through the Ministry of Social Affairs were women.

56. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs supported UNIFEM, UNICEF and UNFPA in developing the Consolidated Appeal Process for several projects, including food security and capacity-building initiatives for marginalized women in 10 villages in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; reproductive health services; mobile psychosocial centres for women in the Gaza Strip; and psychosocial and reproductive health support to poor women in Gaza.

57. The World Bank, through its improved targeting scheme, under the Social Safety Net Reform Project, enabled poor adult women living on their own because of separation, divorce or widowhood, to receive cash assistance from the UNRWA Special Hardship Case Programme.

58. The socio-economic unit of the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process continued to monitor women's participation in the labour market and the effects of closure on their participation. Analysis from data collected each month was used in recommendations to donors and in a published study, "Economic fragmentation and adaptation in the rural West Bank".⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process "Economic fragmentation and adaptation in the rural West Bank", October 2005.

H. Advocacy

59. Several United Nations entities carried out advocacy activities on the situation and rights of Palestinian women. OHCHR participated in various seminars and discussions addressing specific issues of concern on women's human rights, with the goal of highlighting how non-governmental organizations can use human rights mechanisms, especially Special Procedures. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs met with representatives of the Palestinian Women's Institutes, non-governmental organizations and decision makers, including the Ministry for Women's Affairs, and emphasized the role of advocacy for Palestinian women's human rights.

60. International meetings and conferences organized by the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Department of Political Affairs included discussions of the situation of Palestinian women, with Palestinian women and representatives of civil society organizations as panellists. Participants at the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People in April 2006, the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Middle East Peace in June 2006 and the United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People in September 2006 discussed, among other issues, the impact of the occupation on Palestinian women and children, the most vulnerable segment of the Palestinian society.

61. WFP collaborated with the Ministry of Agriculture to organize International Women's Day celebrations in March 2006. To mark International Women's Day in the Gaza Strip, OHCHR held a meeting with 50 refugee women, highlighting women's rights and participation in political life, and participated in activities that emphasized the challenges facing Palestinian women following the recent Palestinian Legislative Council elections.

62. UNESCO inaugurated the Palestinian Women's Research and Documentation Centre on 18 January 2006. UNDP supported the second phase of the management of TAWASOL women's resource centres, which disseminate information on Palestinian women.

I. Media

63. During the reporting period, the Department of Public Information issued four press releases (two in French and two in English) related to Palestinian women. Through its UNifeed service, a daily satellite television newsfeed that reaches hundreds of broadcasters around the world, the Department distributed 12 stories related to the question of Palestine, some of which referred specifically to women and children. In its daily news programmes and current affairs magazines, distributed regionally and worldwide, the Department covered issues related to Palestinian women and children, in both official and non-official languages. The Department also organized an international media seminar on the theme "New challenges in the Middle East peace process and Israeli-Palestinian dialogue" (June 2006), in which two Palestinian women participated.

64. The United Nations Information Service at Geneva organized five press conferences during the reporting period on matters pertaining specifically to Palestinian women. The inter-agency public information and advocacy committee of

the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs published press statements providing the latest facts and figures relating to women.

65. Several entities provided assistance in film production activities related to Palestinian women. UNRWA produced the film "Mother Aysha", which tells the story of a woman in the Gaza Strip who freed her family from economic difficulty by starting a small business with a loan from UNRWA. UNFPA produced a film on reproductive health services for adolescents, entitled "Strengthening emergency obstetric care in Palestine", focusing on the work in reproductive health with refugees of the Jabaliya and Bureij Women's Health Centres in the Gaza Strip. The UNESCO documentary film on women's experiences, "On the road to dialogue", demonstrates the potential of dialogue for increasing understanding through joint Israeli-Palestinian experiences. In connection with the first Palestinian women's film festival, organized in August 2005 with support from UNESCO, the non-governmental organization Shashat set up a multimedia reference library in Ramallah on the subject of women's cinema.

66. Assistance also included training in media and news production. In the Department of Public Information Training Programme for Palestinian Media Practitioners (November 2005), six of the 10 media participants were women. UNESCO designed and conducted a training course for 10 Palestinian women journalists on television journalism and television reporting (December 2005). As part of its Sabaya programme, UNIFEM conducted training in filming, photography and web design at one of the phase I centres, which benefited 10 rural women from five villages.

67. The Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Public Information have included information about Palestinian women in their websites. The Department of Political Affairs continued to update the documents collection under the subject category "women" in the Internet-based United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL), as well as electronic links to relevant web sites outside UNISPAL. The Department of Political Affairs continues to maintain a special web address (<http://domino.un.org/unispal.nsf/women>), which allows external websites to link to the UNISPAL subject category on Palestinian women. The Department of Public Information, through a special feature page, "News Focus: Middle East", maintained easy access to a variety of source documents and information materials on the situation of, and assistance to, Palestinian women.

J. Gender mainstreaming

68. Several United Nations entities undertook activities to strengthen institutional capacities for gender mainstreaming. UNDP supported the Palestinian Ministry of Women's Affairs to mainstream gender perspectives in major sectors through the establishment of gender units in 15 line ministries. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs continued to highlight the situation of Palestinian women in its reports using data disaggregated by sex and age and data on the number of women living below the poverty line, or in deep poverty.

69. UNFPA provided assistance for institutional capacity-building for gender mainstreaming through the development of a gender audit in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The audit provided a comprehensive review of the gaps

preventing the effective implementation of gender equality and the empowerment of women in national planning and policy.

70. FAO carried out sensitization and training in gender analysis, including the training of trainers, to raise awareness of the importance of gender mainstreaming in the rehabilitation and reconstruction process, and of empowering existing women's associations to play a greater role in cooperative production and marketing. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) reported that its post-conflict assessments will include sex-disaggregated data on a systematic basis.

71. To support the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in national planning processes, UNIFEM collaborated with the Ministry of Women's Affairs in drafting the chapter on promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women in the 2005 progress report on Millennium Development Goals in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. UNIFEM also collaborated with the Ministry of Women's Affairs on the content of the gender equality section of the "country assessment lite" document (a simpler version of the Common Country Assessment exercise), in preparation for a future common United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

IV. Conclusion and recommendations

72. During the reporting period, the conflict and the widening fiscal deficit adversely affected women in all spheres of life. Increased restrictions on free movement in and out of the Gaza Strip and within the West Bank left many women unable to access the most basic services.⁶⁷ The reduction of electricity and fuel supply, together with the disruption of water supplies, had a severe impact on the daily life of Palestinians.⁶⁸ Female employment rates, which have been historically low in the entire region, declined even further with the crisis.⁶⁹ Unemployment among the working female population stands at 19.6 per cent.⁷⁰ Palestinian women were not only primarily responsible for running households but were also increasingly engaged in informal employment or self-employment activities to supplement their household incomes. The Millennium Development Goals Report for the Occupied Palestinian Territory (2005) pointed out that political participation of women in Palestinian society remained low.⁷¹ Gender-based violence was reported to be widespread.⁷² Steps were, however, taken by the Palestinian Authority to address the issues identified in the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.⁷³

73. Entities of the United Nations system continued to make efforts to improve the situation of Palestinian women. WHO noted that the financial

⁶⁷ OCHA contribution to the report (2006).

⁶⁸ A/HRC/2/5, para. 5.

⁶⁹ ILO, 2006, report of the Director-General on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories, para. 79.

⁷⁰ Focus 2005, Vol. 4, published by the Communications Office of the UNDP/Programme of Assistance to Palestinian People, p. 45.

⁷¹ Millennium Development Goals, Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2005 Progress Report, December 2005, p. 32.

⁷² UNFPA contribution to the report (2006).

⁷³ E/CN.4/2006/61, para. 4.

crisis threatened to undermine the delivery of health services that served the majority of the Palestinian population, including women.⁷⁴

74. The achievement of gender equality and empowerment of Palestinian women is dependant on a secure and lasting peace. Efforts should be made to ensure that conflict resolution, peacebuilding and reconciliation and reconstruction efforts fully incorporate gender perspectives and that women are involved in these activities, as called for in the Beijing Platform for Action, the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

75. The Ministerial Declaration adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its High-level Segment in July 2006 underlined the important contribution that employment generation can make to post-conflict reconstruction and development.⁷⁵ The creation of an enabling environment for gender equality and the empowerment of Palestinian women requires ending discrimination against Palestinian women in the labour market, through both legal and policy measures, including eliminating occupational segregation and gender wage gaps.

76. The Commission may wish to encourage Member States, entities of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders to intensify their efforts to provide financial and technical assistance to Palestinian women, to fully incorporate gender perspectives into all areas of support to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to systematically assess the impact of these efforts.

⁷⁴ WHO contribution to the report (2006).

⁷⁵ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first Session, Supplement No 1 (A/61/1)*, para. 50.



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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Joint workplan of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report provides a review of the implementation of the 2006 joint workplan of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. It also contains the joint workplan for 2007.

* E/CN.6/2007/1.



I. Introduction

1. On the basis of Commission on the Status of Women resolution 39/5 of 31 March 1995 and Commission on Human Rights resolution 1997/43 of 11 April 1997, a joint workplan is prepared annually for the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The workplan for 2006 is contained in document E/CN.4/2006/59-E/CN.6/2006/9.

2. Cooperation between the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women continued in 2006 towards the objectives of achieving gender equality and the protection and promotion of women's human rights. The major joint activities that were carried out are outlined below.

II. Review of the implementation of the joint workplan for 2006

A. General

3. During the implementation of the current joint workplan, the exchange of information continued between OHCHR, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The Division and OHCHR continued to cooperate within the framework of inter-agency mechanisms, especially the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality under the leadership of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. OHCHR and the Division participated in the fifth session of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality from 22 to 24 February 2006 in New York, contributing to identifying the core elements of a system-wide gender mainstreaming policy and strategy. Both participated actively in several of the Network task forces, including the task force on women, peace and security. The Division and OHCHR also collaborated within the context of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, specifically in the cluster on the advancement of women.

4. The Division for the Advancement of Women and OHCHR continued to exchange documents, reports and information relating to the work of the human rights treaty bodies, including concluding observations, comments, general recommendations and views relating to communications, and circulated those documents to the chairpersons and members of the treaty bodies.

5. During the year, the Division supported OHCHR in the identification of experts on women's rights to conduct the training activities of OHCHR with respect to reporting under international human rights instruments, as well as a number of other training and technical cooperation activities, expert meetings and panel discussions.

6. The Division for the Advancement of Women and OHCHR continued coordinating their databases and websites, and the Division regularly followed up with OHCHR on progress in updating the treaty body database. OHCHR and the Division disseminated information about the human rights treaty system, including

the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, through their networks.

B. Support for human rights treaty bodies

7. The Division for the Advancement of Women and OHCHR continued to support the work of human rights treaty bodies and implementation of the major international human rights instruments. Work to support the reform of the treaty body system also continued.

8. The High Commissioner for Human Rights met with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its thirty-fourth session, in January 2006, to discuss, inter alia, the proposal of OHCHR for a unified standing treaty body and the proposal contained in a plan of action submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session (see A/59/2005/Add.3) to transfer responsibility for supporting the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to OHCHR. In January 2006, the High Commissioner also held a dialogue with staff of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division.

9. OHCHR attended briefings convened by the Division for entities of the United Nations system in advance of the sessions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. OHCHR also participated in two rounds of inter-agency meetings, convened by the United Nations Population Fund, aimed at submitting joint reports by United Nations country teams to the Committee. OHCHR continued to provide information for the reports prepared by the Division for the Committee on ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee, a regular item on the Committee agenda.

10. The Division for the Advancement of Women contributed to documentation prepared for the fifth inter-committee meeting and the eighteenth meeting of the chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies, which took place in Geneva, from 19 to 21 June and 22 to 23 June 2006, respectively. In particular, the Division provided input into the finalization of harmonized guidelines for reporting under the seven core human rights treaties (see HRI/MC/2006/3 and Corr.1), and submitted updated information from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for the report on reservations (see HRI/MC/2006/5 and Rev.1) and the report on working methods of the treaty bodies (see HRI/MC/2006/4 and Corr.1). The Division staff participated in both meetings, as did the Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women.

11. OHCHR and the Division for the Advancement of Women supported treaty bodies in their follow-up to the recommendations of the eighteenth meeting of chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies and the fifth inter-committee meeting. This included the organization, by OHCHR, of a meeting of a working group consisting of one member of each of the seven human rights treaty bodies, on the harmonization of working methods, from 27 to 28 November 2006.

12. A staff member of the Division participated in the informal meeting organized by OHCHR in Malbun, Liechtenstein, from 14 to 16 July 2006, hosted by the Government of Liechtenstein, to discuss the proposals of the High Commissioner on

reform of the treaty body system. A senior staff member of the Office participated in the fifth informal meeting of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, organized by the Division and held in Berlin, Germany, from 2 to 4 May 2006, to review, *inter alia*, issues related to treaty body reform and the proposals of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

13. In December 2005, OHCHR and the Division for the Advancement of Women jointly organized a subregional workshop on the implementation of the concluding observations and comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in Egypt, for six countries in North and West Africa. During the year, OHCHR and the Division convened a number of other meetings, including training seminars and other capacity-building activities, to support implementation of human rights treaties, including concluding observations and comments at the national level.

C. Interaction with special procedures mandate holders

14. The Division for the Advancement of Women continued its interaction with special procedures mandate holders. At the invitation of the Division, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences served on the advisory committee for the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122/Add.1 and Corr.1). The Special Rapporteur also held consultations with the Division in October 2006, on the occasion of her dialogue with the Third Committee of the General Assembly.

D. Support for intergovernmental bodies

15. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women addressed the Human Rights Council at its first and second sessions, in June and October 2006, highlighting the linkages between gender equality and human rights.

16. The Division for the Advancement of Women and OHCHR continued efforts to enhance cooperation between the Commission on the Status of Women and the former Commission on Human Rights. The Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights addressed the Commission on the Status of Women at its fiftieth session in March 2006, and the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women participated in the second session of the Human Rights Council in September 2006. The High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women discussed opportunities for future collaboration between these two intergovernmental bodies.

17. OHCHR participated in an expert group meeting, organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), hosted by the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, in Florence, Italy, from 25 to 28 September 2006, on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child. The meeting was convened in preparation for the fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women and its consideration of the theme "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child". OHCHR also facilitated participation of the Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in this meeting.

18. Coordination of the preparation of reports to be submitted to intergovernmental bodies continued. In relation to the ongoing work of the Commission on the Status of Women on advisability of the appointment of a special rapporteur on laws that discriminate against women, OHCHR provided the Division with its views on ways and means that could best complement the work of the existing mechanisms and enhance the capacity of the Commission with respect to discriminatory laws (see Commission on the Status of Women resolution 50/3; see also E/CN.6/2006/8). OHCHR also provided an input to the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women. These views and inputs will be reflected in the relevant reports to be submitted to the Commission at its fifty-first session. OHCHR contributed to the report of the Secretary-General on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system, submitted to the Economic and Social Council (see E/2006/65).

19. OHCHR continued to participate as a member of the task force established by the Division for the Advancement of Women in support of the preparation of the Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women (see General Assembly resolution 58/185). OHCHR regularly participated in task force meetings via teleconference, and contributed comments on the draft of the study, and to the dissemination of information about the study. It contributed to the inventory compiled by the Division of activities on violence against women implemented by the entities of the United Nations system.

20. The Division continued its cooperation with the Secretariat for the Secretary-General's study on violence against children, and provided comments on the draft of the report of the Secretary-General. The Director of the Division and the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women met with the independent expert on 9 June to exchange views on the recommendations of both studies.

III. Joint workplan for 2007

21. Several recent developments will shape future cooperation between the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women, including the decision of the Secretary-General to transfer responsibility for supporting the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to OHCHR in Geneva and the establishment in OHCHR of a Women's Human Rights and Gender Unit, pursuant to the High Commissioner's action and strategic management plans. The Secretary-General's follow-up to the recommendation of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence to establish one United Nations entity focused on gender equality and women's empowerment, and any action Member States may be taking thereon, will also impact on such future cooperation. Accordingly, OHCHR and the Division will keep under review the joint workplan for 2007 so as to update it as necessary.

A. Support for human rights treaty bodies

22. Discussions continue between OHCHR and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women on the implications of the decision of the Secretary-General to transfer responsibility for servicing the

Committee to OHCHR. The High Commissioner for Human Rights will meet with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its thirty-seventh session (15 January to 2 February 2007) to discuss aspects of the High Commissioner's plan of action pertaining to the human rights treaty bodies and the transfer of responsibility for supporting the Committee to OHCHR.

23. OHCHR and the Division for the Advancement of Women will continue to coordinate, cooperate and exchange information on matters falling within their respective mandates and responsibilities. Activities will include the exchange of documents, reports and the results of the work of the treaty bodies and the circulation of those documents to the chairpersons and members of the treaty bodies; follow-up to the recommendations of the eighteenth meeting of chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies and the points of agreement of the fifth inter-committee meeting, including support to experts designated to participate in working groups established by these meetings, and any future working groups that might be set up; and updating of the synthesized report on the working methods of all treaty bodies. OHCHR will provide information for the reports prepared by the Division for the Committee on ways and means of expediting its work. Exchange of information and collaboration will continue among staff of OHCHR and the Division and designated Committee members with regard to communications and inquiry procedures.

24. The Division will contribute to the preparations for and conduct of the nineteenth meeting of persons chairing human rights treaty bodies and the sixth inter-committee meeting and to any ad hoc meetings in relation to the work of the treaty bodies that may be convened during 2007. The Division, the Chairperson and designated members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women will participate in those meetings. The Division will contribute to the ongoing consultation process on treaty body reform with a view to strengthening the implementation of the treaties at the national level.

B. Support for intergovernmental bodies and special procedures

25. The Division for the Advancement of Women and OHCHR will continue to support the participation of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women and of the President of the Human Rights Council in each other's sessions and the participation of the Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in their sessions.

26. The Division for the Advancement of Women and OHCHR will continue to seek input and provide comments for other reports, as requested. The Division will provide targeted input for the work of special procedures.

27. The Division for the Advancement of Women will cooperate with OHCHR on follow-up to any action the Commission on the Status of Women will be taking at its fifty-first session with respect to a mechanism to address discriminatory laws.

C. Technical cooperation, advisory services and meetings

28. The Division for the Advancement of Women and OHCHR will improve early information exchange and coordination on technical cooperation activities, in

particular by sharing plans for such activities, cooperate whenever possible in such activities, especially with respect to training activities on reporting under international human rights instruments and the follow-up to concluding comments and observations, and cooperate in preparing and piloting training packages on international human rights instruments. Staff from each entity will be invited to contribute to and participate in relevant workshops, as appropriate. OHCHR will also invite the Division to participate in relevant meetings of the field representatives of OHCHR.

29. The Division for the Advancement of Women will continue to participate as a member of the reference group for the Action 2 global programme on strengthening United Nations support for the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide.

D. Awareness-raising and outreach

30. The Division for the Advancement of Women and OHCHR will continue to ensure that the electronic database covering the seven treaty bodies is up to date, fully operational and accessible to both. Websites will also be systematically updated and improved to enhance information about human rights in general and women's human rights in particular. The Division will continue to monitor progress with respect to integrating gender perspectives in the work of intergovernmental and expert bodies.

E. Inter-agency cooperation

31. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women, under the leadership of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, will continue to cooperate within the framework of inter-agency mechanisms.

32. With the establishment of its Women's Human Rights and Gender Unit, OHCHR has reinforced its capacity to work on women's human rights and press for full implementation of the international legal framework, which proscribes discrimination on the basis of sex and guarantees equal civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights for men and women. OHCHR envisages continued close cooperation with the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women and other United Nations partners, including the proposed consolidated entity, to advance gender equality and the protection and promotion of women's human rights.



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programmatic matters**

Report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith to the Commission on the Status of Women and the Human Rights Council the report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women on the activities of the Fund to eliminate violence against women, which was prepared in compliance with General Assembly resolution 50/166 of 22 December 1995.

* E/CN.6/2007/1.

Report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women on the elimination of violence against women

1. In its resolution 50/166 of 22 December 1995, the General Assembly gave the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) the mandate to strengthen its activities to eliminate violence against women in order to accelerate the implementation of the recommendations set out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.¹ This resolution also established the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women as a key inter-agency mechanism to advance action to address violence against women. The Trust Fund was set up in 1996 and became operational in 1997, with UNIFEM as the Fund's administrator. In doing so, UNIFEM works closely with the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system as part of systemwide efforts to eliminate violence against women.

2. The present report, to the fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the fourth session of the Human Rights Council, documents the activities undertaken by UNIFEM in 2006 to eliminate violence against women and to manage the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women.

Background and context

3. Over the past 20 years there have been significant advances in awareness and understanding of violence against women, and in its recognition as a serious violation of women's human rights. The issue has been moving from the margins to the centre of development cooperation, as is reflected in the priority attention that ending violence against women has been given in international human rights standards and at world conferences. The commitment to ending violence against women has been growing within the United Nations system; and, for an increasing number of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, work to eliminate violence against women has become an important focus for programming support.

4. This enhanced attention, while critically important, has yet to translate into measurable decreases in the levels of violence to which women around the world are subjected. A number of important studies over the past few years, including, most recently, the 2006 Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women,² as well as reports of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, the UNIFEM report *Not a Minute More*³ and the report of the Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality entitled "Taking action: achieving gender equality and empowering women",⁴ have identified concrete measures that must now be taken to move the agenda forward. As noted in the 2006 in-depth study of the Secretary-General,² one of the most important conclusions has been that the success in integrating women's right to be free from violence into

¹ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution I, annexes I and II.

² A/61/122/Add.1.

³ *Not a Minute More. Ending Violence against Women*, UNIFEM (2003) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.III.F.2).

⁴ United Nations Millennium Project, Task Force on Education and Gender Equality (Earthscan, London and Sterling, Virginia, 2005).

international, regional and national normative frameworks must be followed up with the effective implementation of these frameworks. In addition, the previously mentioned reports point out the chronic underfunding of work to end this violence and, more specifically, the failure to adequately support and collaborate with the women's organizations, whose expertise and commitment are essential to progress at the country level, as areas of great concern. Other areas identified for urgent action include the enhancement of coordinated efforts within the United Nations system, the development of greater capacity in data collection and impact evaluation of interventions, and the commitment of dedicated attention and resources to the cross-cutting dimensions of violence against women, in relation to issues such as HIV/AIDS, and peace and security.

United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women

5. Since its inception, the Trust Fund has identified and supported innovative and catalytic initiatives from around the world that aim to break new ground, create new models and mobilize new constituencies in the growing movement to eliminate violence against women in all of its manifestations. The Trust Fund generates lessons and good practices that inform larger programmes of the United Nations and its civil society and governmental partners at the national, regional and global levels.

6. The strategy guiding the Trust Fund for the period 2005-2008 introduced changes that respond to lessons learned from the first eight years of the Fund's operation and reflect key recommendations that have emerged from important global studies on violence against women. Of particular note are measures undertaken to enhance United Nations systemwide involvement with the Fund, to target the critical areas of support for national-level implementation and the intersection of violence against women with cross-cutting issues and to increase the resources available for end-violence work.

7. The Trust Fund's decision-making body has, since the Fund's inception, been composed of representatives of a range of United Nations entities. Beginning in 2005, key aspects of the project approval process were devolved to the subregional level, which has facilitated expanded United Nations system involvement. In 2005 and 2006, in addition to convening global meetings, UNIFEM convened subregional project appraisal committees composed of United Nations agencies, other international organizations, and experts from governments and civil society. In 2006, 12 subregional project appraisal committees met in Ecuador, Mexico, Brazil, Barbados, Senegal, Nigeria, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Nepal, Thailand and Bratislava. United Nations entities that participated in Trust Fund decision-making in 2006 included: the Division for the Advancement of Women, the Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, the Pan American Health Organization, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations

Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization (WHO).

8. The 2005-2008 Trust Fund strategy has targeted its attention to two critical areas of the work to end violence against women. First, a dedicated window was opened within the Trust Fund to support the effective implementation of existing laws and policies. This window provides support to non-governmental and governmental organizations to build awareness of new laws and policies, to repair deficiencies in the light of human rights requirements, to identify necessary budgetary allocations for implementation, to increase the capacity of judiciaries, law enforcement and health workers to put laws into effect, and to create data collection systems and indicators to assist in monitoring their effectiveness. Second, in collaboration with the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, the Johnson & Johnson Corporation and other donors, a window was opened to support programmes that address the intersection of HIV/AIDS and violence against women. That window supports projects that increase action and knowledge about the linkages between violence against women and HIV/AIDS, and about the stigma and discrimination that prevent women from seeking HIV information and health services.

9. Also under the 2005-2008 strategy, an evaluation partnership was established with the World Bank, which supported the development of a methodology to measure the impact of Trust Fund grants. A new monitoring and evaluation plan is being built into Trust Fund projects based on evaluation guidelines developed by UNIFEM and the World Bank, and lessons learned will be shared widely with partners and key stakeholders. In addition, Trust Fund grantees will be supported with technical assistance and capacity development, with the objective of enhancing the sustainability of interventions and institutions.

10. Efforts to increase the Trust Fund's resource base have yielded significant results. Since 1997, the Trust Fund has awarded in total almost \$13 million of grants to 226 projects in over 100 countries. Resources for the Trust Fund's grant-making have doubled, from \$800,000 in 2004 to \$1.8 million in 2005, and nearly quadrupled to \$3.5 million in 2006. In 2006, donors included the Governments of Austria, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Slovenia, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United States of America, the UNIFEM national committees in Australia, Singapore and the United States of America, non-profit organizations (World Day of Prayer USA, Zonta International), private companies (Johnson & Johnson, Macy's, TAG Heuer), and many individuals who contributed to the Trust Fund on the occasion of the UNIFEM thirtieth anniversary commemoration. Despite this expansion of the resource base of the Trust Fund, it must still be noted that the demand for Trust Fund support continues to greatly exceed available funds, with \$190 million in requests received in 2006.

11. UNIFEM promotion of the Trust Fund has also stimulated regional and national replications that are generating their own resources and grant-making. In the Arab States, UNIFEM launched a regional replication of the Trust Fund for a period of three years. In Brazil, UNIFEM has joined with the private sector public relations firm Full Jazz Comunidade to launch a national fund on ending violence against women.

The 2006 Trust Fund grant-making cycle

12. In 2006, the Trust Fund rolled out its eleventh cycle of grant-making. Through the call for proposals that focused on supporting the implementation of existing laws, policies and plans to eliminate violence against women, the Trust Fund provided \$2.8 million to 28 initiatives working to strengthen the implementation of laws and policies in 20 countries: Somalia, Cameroon, Rwanda, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Liberia, Zimbabwe, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Grenada, Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, India, Mongolia, Bulgaria and Ukraine. A total of 465 grant proposals were received in 2006 under the implementation window.

13. In all of the projects, integrated approaches were designed for supporting effective implementation, which, with variations reflecting national contexts, combine capacity development for government, judicial and law enforcement officials; support for increasing budgetary resources; popular awareness-raising; and the development of tracking and accountability tools. A number of projects have also identified more specific implementation challenges. The projects funded for Liberia, India, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Ecuador and Bolivia, for example, incorporate a focus on work with local and community-based justice delivery systems. As well, a number of the 2006 projects, including those from Guatemala, Nicaragua and Bulgaria, are focused on ensuring that marginalized or disadvantaged groups of women benefit equally from the protection offered by new laws. Among these initiatives are the following:

- In Liberia, the application of a new law on rape that was passed in 2005 by traditional and local courts will be reviewed, in order to identify gaps and patterns in court rulings and the execution of judgments. The project will raise awareness among communities of existing mechanisms to protect women from violence and develop the capacity of local court officials to effectively apply existing anti-violence laws.
- In Mongolia, a project will work to strengthen the implementation of existing laws against domestic violence and trafficking. It will develop an advanced model of victim protection and increased budgetary resources, including by fostering the lobbying and monitoring capacities of civil society groups. Media professionals will be trained to cover violence against women in informed and gender-sensitive ways, and gender stereotypes will be challenged through a public campaign using the voices of children and youth.
- In Bulgaria, support will be provided to improve the access of differently abled women and girls to assistance and protection under the new domestic violence law. Data and statistics on violence against differently abled women and girls will be collected and standard practices developed to identify cases of abuse and tailor protection efforts. Professionals will be trained to respect the rights and needs of victims who are differently abled and the survivors themselves and their family members will be encouraged to seek assistance.
- In Nicaragua, a model to collect data and define services for women victims of violence that has been piloted in two municipalities will be adapted for the specific needs of diverse communities such as the Afro-descendent/Miskita communities along the Atlantic coast. The project will help strengthen links between State institutions and civil society in order to more systematically eliminate sexual and family violence. It will train police to offer specialized

attention to victims and to collect data correctly, as well as provide support services to survivors.

14. The second window of the 2006 Trust Fund call targets grant-making to innovative approaches for addressing the interlinkages between HIV/AIDS and violence against women. Through this window, the Trust Fund will support a cohort of five large projects over a period of three years to stimulate action and knowledge on: (a) effective actions to reduce intimate partner, sexual and gender-based violence in locales of high HIV prevalence and high gender inequality; and (b) strengthened efforts to reduce violence against women and girls that results from stigma and discrimination and to increase their access to treatment and care. The selected grantees will be announced in early 2007.

Achievements of past Trust Fund grants

15. Trust Fund grantees from previous cycles continue to demonstrate that the catalytic support received yields tangible results and effective partnerships with governmental and community-based stakeholders.

16. A successful example of working towards the elimination of cultural forms of violence by developing strategic partnerships at the institutional and community level was set by Centre Djoliba in Mali. Centre Djoliba has partnered with ministries and community representatives to combat female excision through capacity-building, awareness-raising and advocacy. Ministry officials, mayors, parliamentarians, traditional and religious leaders, NGO staff and female excision practitioners were trained on the impact of excision on women's human rights, and public advocacy campaigns to encourage community involvement were held. As a result, several communities, including religious leaders from 54 villages, are developing concrete action plans to eliminate excision. In Kita, the mayors and religious leaders who attended the training established a committee for public education campaigns against excision that advocates for women's human rights. The Ministry of Education, in its 2006-2007 training curriculum, has incorporated anti-excision programmes and produced training books, and the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and Family has developed training programmes for parliamentarians.

17. In Nepal, Equal Access, in partnership with General Welfare Prathistan, demonstrated the importance of using trained rural women as community radio reporters and facilitators of community listening groups. The reporters collected stories from rural women on the basis of which a 26-episode radio programme entitled "Changing our world", covering issues relating to women's human rights, peacebuilding, violence against women, reproductive rights, and HIV/AIDS, was developed and broadcast, reaching two million rural listeners. Sixty community listener groups were set up to encourage grass-roots leadership and changes in attitudes and behaviour. The project created a space for rural women to speak out against violence and discrimination. It succeeded in increasing the awareness of community members of violence against women and served as a catalyst for actual changes in attitudes and behaviours. It led to a reduction of incidents of domestic violence in their communities and to increased reporting of incidents of violence to authorities. The project also created a pool of qualified and motivated women reporters, among them several who were able to apply their newly acquired skills in a follow-up radio project implemented by Equal Access.

18. The Mothertongue Project in South Africa has worked to reduce the violence faced by HIV-positive women and girls as a result of stigma and discrimination. A pilot group of women living with HIV/AIDS and survivors of rape was trained in traditional participatory theatre techniques. These women conducted outreach theatre performances in which they engaged community members in discussions on the intersections of violence against women and HIV/AIDS, encouraging them to take an active role in the theatrical action itself and in their communities. The training provided women living with HIV/AIDS with a safe space to speak out about experiences of violence and stigma, which turned out to be a powerful tool of catharsis. The project also resulted in encouraging women to seek assistance from support groups and authorities, take legal actions after having been expelled from their homes or leave abusive relationships. Mothertongue is planning to replicate the lessons learned in this successful project by identifying an interested group of women among the pilot group to conduct similar theatre-based training in other townships.

19. In Rwanda, the Forum for Activists against Torture implemented a train-the-trainers project for female ex-combatants on human rights, sexual violence against women and HIV/AIDS. The training offered ex-combatants a safe space to speak out about their own experiences of violence and trauma and empowered them to play a leading role in the fight against sexual violence against women and HIV/AIDS in their communities. As a result, some ex-combatants formed community-based associations and human rights clubs for women leaders to advocate against gender-based violence and torture. They also reached out to local communities to support women victims of violence and raised their confidence to report cases of abuse, seek counselling and support and pursue legal actions against the perpetrators. The project also helped to foster the reintegration of ex-combatants into society. Some women were able to find new jobs as trainers with the Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, on the basis of the skills and qualifications acquired in the project.

20. In Peru, the Human Rights Commission undertook research and published a report on sexual violence committed against women during the armed conflict between 1980 and 1996. It advocated, with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, to place the issue of violence against women on the Commission agenda. As a result, the findings and recommendations of the Human Rights Commission were taken up by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and fed into the recommendations presented to the Peruvian Government. By establishing a comprehensive knowledge base and sensitizing stakeholders, the project contributed to shedding light on the violence committed against women during the armed conflict and to making it an issue of public concern.

21. In Serbia and Montenegro, Women in Black, through interactive workshops and lectures that connected more than 300 women at the grass-roots level, created the first expanded knowledge base on gender, peace and security in Serbia. The project resulted in strengthening women's peace networks in their work on reconciliation. It also produced a resolution on women, peace and security implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in Serbia that, as a result of advocacy efforts supported by women MPs and women NGOs, was eventually adopted by the regional government of the autonomous province Vojvodina. This Trust Fund project laid the foundation for the Women's Peace Coalition, which was

established later in 2006 by Women in Black and Kosova Women's Network, with UNIFEM support.

UNIFEM programming under its 2004-2007 multi-year funding framework

22. In addition to administering the Trust Fund, UNIFEM identifies and supports innovative and catalytic strategies to end violence against women in its programming and partnerships. Four outcome-level results are pursued in end-violence programming under the UNIFEM 2004-2007 multi-year funding framework (MYFF), whereby: (a) legislation and policies are formulated and implemented to promote and protect women's human right to be free from violence; (b) mainstream institutions demonstrate the leadership, commitment, technical capacity and accountability needed to address violence against women; (c) gender equality advocates have the knowledge and are positioned to spearhead and transform policies, programmes and resource allocations so as to end violence against women; and (d) there is a change from harmful and discriminatory attitudes and practices that perpetuate violence against women.

23. In its programming for effective laws and policies, UNIFEM has supported the introduction and strengthening of legislation against gender-based violence in Brazil, India, Kazakhstan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe and Cameroon. Where efforts to reform laws and policies are at a preliminary stage, UNIFEM has supported reviews, assessments and consensus-building. In 2006 this included legislative reviews for compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in the Pacific, technical analysis of the penal codes in Kenya and the Dominican Republic, and support for multi-stakeholder input into national actions plans in Algeria, Haiti and India. The effective implementation of existing laws and policies requires the allocation of sufficient budgetary resources by Governments. In Bolivia, with the support of UNIFEM and other partners, budget regulation was introduced at the municipal level, and the municipality of Cercado for the first time earmarked funds to support programmes addressing gender equality and violence against women.

24. In its programming to strengthen mainstream institutional responses to violence against women, UNIFEM works to build the capacity of duty-bearers to fulfil their obligations to promote and protect women's human rights, with a focus on law enforcement, the judiciary, parliamentarians, government ministries, legal practitioners, academia and United Nations partners. Efforts to train police and/or set up specialized police units to intervene in cases of violence against women were supported in Cameroon, Jordan, the Sudan and Rwanda. In the latter country, UNIFEM, as part of a joint project with UNDP, supported the establishment and operationalization of a gender desk within the national police to provide rapid response and referral services and to ensure that violence against women is no longer treated with impunity. Discussions are under way to replicate the successful Rwandan experiences in Burundi and Cameroon.

25. In Liberia, UNIFEM facilitated capacity-building for statement takers at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, highlighting the impact of armed conflicts upon women, in particular the high incidence of physical and sexual violence. In Kazakhstan, UNIFEM supported a memorandum of understanding between anti-violence NGOs and the Ministry of the Interior, including training for the Ministry staff on how to work with victims of violence. In Afghanistan, technical assistance

was provided to the newly established inter-ministerial commission to eliminate violence against women, and, in Mexico, the investigation of femicides in Mexico carried out by the Parliamentary Commission was supported. UNIFEM facilitated the approval of the Parliamentary Pact for the creation of an inter-parliamentary network promoting women's right to a life without violence among the national parliaments of Mexico, Guatemala and Spain. In India, UNIFEM entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Confederation of Indian Industry to promote gender equality, in particular to address sexual harassment at the work place and HIV/AIDS.

26. UNIFEM has also worked within the United Nations system to advocate for a consistently applied policy to address violence against women in post-conflict needs assessments and responses to crises. As a member of the Joint Partnership against Sexual Violence in Crisis Settings and Recovery Settings, which was established in 2006, UNIFEM has joined forces with United Nations entities including UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR, WHO and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as well as NGO partners, to devise a joint strategy for strengthening prevention efforts, expanding the access of victims of sexual violence to psychological and social assistance and health services and developing a comprehensive evidence base through the monitoring and dissemination of data. UNIFEM also partnered with the African Union to support Darfurian women's participation in peace talks to address women's traumatic experiences of violence and displacement and to facilitate the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in the Sudan.

27. Responses to the pandemic of violence against women are hampered by a lack of accurate data and statistics about its scope and prevalence. UNIFEM is supporting, in cooperation with United Nations partners and civil society, efforts to improve the generation and use of data, for instance, in Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Burundi, Haiti, Jordan, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic and the seven countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. In Albania, for instance, UNIFEM supported the publication of a report on the interlinkages between women's lack of economic opportunities and their vulnerability to trafficking, which seeks to promote a holistic and long-term approach to anti-trafficking. In Haiti, UNIFEM and the Inter-American Development Bank supported a study on gender-based violence that has fed into the development of a multisector national plan of action against gender-based violence.

28. As part of its programming to strengthen the capacity of gender equality advocates, UNIFEM has cultivated existing, and has built new, strategic partnerships with leaders in parliaments, governmental bodies and civil society, for instance, in Burundi, Cameroon, Morocco, Nepal, the occupied Palestinian territories, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Uganda. In Rwanda, UNIFEM, in collaboration with UNDP, provided technical support to the Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians in the process of drafting a gender-based violence bill that was passed in 2006. In India, UNIFEM supported the creation of a national coalition of media persons against gender violence, human trafficking and HIV/AIDS, to foster gender-sensitive and rights-based reporting.

29. In its programming to bring about changes in harmful and discriminatory practices, UNIFEM has supported round tables, panel discussions, and theatre and multi-media campaigns during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based

Violence Campaign (November 25-December 10), for instance, in Armenia, Brazil, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, India, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Nepal, Peru, Swaziland, Tajikistan, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Zimbabwe. In Latin America and the Caribbean region, UNIFEM participated in a joint campaign with governments, women activists, journalists and United Nations partners to advocate for legal and judicial reform, support services and the use of international human rights instruments. In Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, UNIFEM, in cooperation with a regional network of women's peacebuilding groups and the non-governmental news programme *Internews*, has used the weekly television programme "Crossroads" to highlight gender equality issues such as domestic violence, reproductive health or women's participation in peace processes. This popular programme reaches an estimated 12 million viewers through the region. In Morocco, UNIFEM and other partners supported a project to expand and foster networking among legal and counselling centres for women victims of violence (Anaruz Network). In India, UNIFEM has been partnering with Ponds brand of Hindustan Lever Limited, of the private sector, for a national campaign on domestic violence. In China, UNIFEM, as implementing agency of the joint United Nations China Gender Facility Programme and in cooperation with the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Women's Federation of Jiangsu Province, has launched a new initiative to promote shelters for victims of violence in China.

Conclusion

"Violence against women impoverishes individuals, families, communities and countries. The social, political and economic costs of allowing it to continue unabated are great and call for a commensurate investment in women's security. Such an effort requires increased political will expressed through a much greater commitment of financial and human resources".⁵

30. In his 2006 report, the Secretary-General drew attention to the importance of significantly increasing the flow of resources to end-violence work, as a necessary precondition for realizing women's right to live free from violence. He stressed that violence against women has generally not been treated as seriously as other forms of crime or human rights abuse; and that the level of investment and resources allocated to legal and support services, let alone prevention, remains minimal compared to many other issues. The Secretary-General issued a call for the commitment of greatly increased resources, and provided concrete recommendations regarding the future of funding for anti-violence work. Included in these recommendations is that States, donors and international organizations significantly increase their support to the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women.

31. The United Nations Trust Fund, the only multilateral funding mechanism dedicating support to national-level actions to end violence against women, has an essential role to play in moving the end-violence agenda forward. In the first two years of implementing the Trust Fund's 2005-2008 strategy, resources available through the Trust Fund quadrupled, reflecting a broadening recognition of this role. The financial target set for grant-making in 2007 is \$10 million, and the Trust Fund invites Member States, as they respond to the recommendations of the report of the Secretary-General, to contribute to achieving this goal.

⁵ A/61/122/Add.1, para. 388.

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Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

**Follow-up to Economic and Social Council
resolutions and decisions**

**Letter dated 2 November 2006 from the President of the
Economic and Social Council to the Chairperson of the
Commission on the Status of Women**

This year's substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, held in the follow-up phase of the 2005 World Summit, had an intense focus on implementing the United Nations development agenda — that is, the development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, agreed at United Nations conferences and summits — and on realizing the global partnership for development.

The Ministerial Declaration on Employment Generation and Decent Work for All identified a number of specific steps aimed at furthering the implementation of the World Summit commitment to make the goal of full and productive employment a central objective of national and international policies. It called for the development of 10-year action plans and assigned the Council a role in monitoring progress on the implementation of the Declaration. This should give new impetus to our implementation efforts.

The theme of the coordination segment was very pertinent to the ongoing efforts to implement the United Nations development agenda. The question of translating economic growth into social development, including eradication of poverty and hunger, remains central to the success of those efforts. The deliberations showed that we do not have definitive answers and the Council asked the United Nations system to study the question further.

The operational activities segment was of special significance this year. For the first time, the Council launched the triennial review of funding for development cooperation. The resolution demonstrated that the Council was committed to play its oversight and guiding role by providing detailed guidance to the United Nations

* E/CN.6/2007/1.



development system to improve its functioning at the country level, as well as guidance to the Secretariat to better undertake its assessment and analytical work. This is significant for both the operational and the normative sides of the United Nations.

During the humanitarian affairs segment, the Council discussed two of the most crucial issues in humanitarian emergencies, namely gender-based violence and chronically underfunded emergencies.

I should like to reflect on some of the important proposals made by the Council concerning the functional commissions. A list of the resolutions adopted by the Council specifically calling for action by the functional commissions is attached to this letter for your reference (see annex).

Among them, I should like to draw your particular attention to Council resolution 2006/44 on the role of the Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcome of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits. In that resolution, the Council welcomed the progress made in the review of their working methods by several functional commissions and subsidiary bodies of the Council during their 2006 sessions, and invited those functional commissions and other relevant subsidiary bodies that had not yet done so to continue to examine their methods of work, and to submit their reports to the Council with the aim of concluding the review of their working methods by 2007; invited the functional commissions that had not yet done so to work towards strengthening their cooperation with the regional commissions, as well as relevant funds and programmes of the United Nations and the specialized agencies; and decided to replace the individual joint bureaux meetings with one meeting of the chairs of the functional commissions and the Council to be held at the beginning of each calendar year, making use of teleconferencing whenever possible.

I would greatly appreciate it if the issues raised above could be brought to the attention of your functional commission for consideration and action. I thank you for your active and continued collaboration.

In view of the ongoing discussion on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, the Council is expected to assume some new tasks, such as the annual ministerial-level reviews and the biennial Development Cooperation Forum, as well as to revitalize its existing activities. These will place the Council at the centre of efforts to monitor and advance implementation of the development agenda, in a unified and coherent way. A major challenge for the Council and the functional commissions will be helping to operationalize these new functions. I hope that you will devote part of your sessions in 2007 to consideration of this question. I hope that the anticipated changes will lead to further strengthening of the interaction among the functional commissions and the Council and to a more effective role of the Council's family in working towards the common objective of carrying out the United Nations development agenda.

(Signed) Ali Hachani

Annex**Resolutions adopted by the Economic and Social Council
in 2006 requesting follow-up****A. Resolutions adopted by the Economic and Social Council in
2006 requesting follow-up by all the functional commissions**

<i>Resolution number</i>	<i>Title</i>
2006/44	Role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, in the light of General Assembly resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B and 57/270 B

**B. Resolutions adopted by the Economic and Social Council in 2006
requesting follow-up by the Commission on the Status of Women**

<i>Resolution number</i>	<i>Title</i>
2006/8	Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women
2006/9	Future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women

**C. Resolutions calling for action by all relevant entities of the
United Nations system**

<i>Resolution number</i>	<i>Title</i>
2006/7	Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan
2006/36	Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system